

Translation: A Sine Qua Non for International Confraternity

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ABSTRACT: *This research endeavour lays emphasis on the role of translation in creating an environment, conducive to international confraternity. It, by making a robust analysis of breaking down of cultural barriers and the emergence of globalized corporatocracy, highlights the ways by which an intra-cultural as well as inter-cultural interaction can be facilitated. Moreover, it suggests various platforms: the dialogues between scholars from different cultures, a consistent communication between the source language and target language texts, i.e. which may help in ending cultural deadlocks and play their role in bringing various nations vis-a-vis. It concludes that translation is a prerequisite for inter-cultural exposure, leading to international confraternity.*

Keywords: International Confraternity, Inter-cultural exposure, Post-structuralism, Post-colonialism, Post-modernism, Cultural deadlocks, and Nationality.

Introduction:

Translation should have an extremely significant role in modern world where there are so many culturally, especially linguistically, distinct nationalities and sub-nationalities coexisting side by side. This is so because, in order for the generation of an overarching national narrative, and its presentation on international platform, which does not marginalize a particular sub-nationality or unduly favour another, there has to be an intra-national as well as international communication of narratives. On account of the linguistic divide – which often but not always accompanies national identity - this can only occur with the help of translation. Translating the narratives of all the various cultural identities that inhabit the world of today, into regional as well as international languages may promote recognition, mutual understanding, and acceptance. From such inter-cultural exposure, nations could then be in a position to construct an all encompassing and nuanced narrative which may be projected out into the international community without fear of constant allegations of classist, racist or ethnic bias and misrepresentation.

Translation has the capacity of bringing cultures, across the world, closer to each other. It can bring out the similarities among several cultures thus diminishing the factors responsible for the clash of civilizations. It can work for the projection of native vocabulary on international level as well as providing opportunity to indigenous language for borrowing the words from source languages. Since language is the custodian of culture so both the languages, source and target, are enabled to understand each other's culture. Sherry Simon, a translation studies expert, focuses on the cultural turn in translation. She has written, "Cultural studies allows us to situate linguistic transfer within the multiple 'post' realities of world: post-structuralism, post-colonialism and postmodernism" (Munday 202).

The translations of the works of Allama Iqbal by the Persians, Faiz Ahmed Faiz's by the Russians and Pablo Neruda's translations in English built a strong case in favor of translation providing inter-cultural understanding. Although, it's the responsibility of writers and academia to work for bridging the gaps between nations, yet the role of state should also be of an active participant in this regard. Edward Said has also indicated the breaking of cultural barriers in his book *Culture and Imperialism*. However, government should not be expected to work for it alone. Thus, the role of translation in creating a global understanding

needs, somehow, to be acknowledged. Moreover, the translator should be aware of borrowing models from the original text. "Translation is a model. To comprehend it as a model one must go back to the original, for that contains the law of governing the translation; its untranslatability" (Benjamin 89).

Translation embarks on bringing the writers camouflaged under regional colours to mainstream currents. Ismat Chughtai has recently been brought to purview by some translations of her work from Urdu to English. Her work is equally claimed by both India and Pakistan. She has highlighted the role of sub-continental women as "representations of independent thought and action" (Hashmi 36). The issue of representation is, somehow, on high priority. The works translated from regional to international language crave for providing suitable expression to satisfy the curiosity of the reader of translated work. English reader has, yet, to develop a native sensibility to have the feel of original. Institution of literature works to nationalist ends. Edward Said has written, "If the body of objects we study – the corpus formed by works of literature – belongs to, gains coherence from, and in a sense emanates out of, the concepts of nation, nationality, and even of race, there is a very little in contemporary critical discourse, making these actualities possible as subjects of discussion" (Bhabha 138).

National consciousness and the role of translators:

Since translation of narratives can create mutual understanding, harmony and national consciousness among indigenous people, the role of the translator assumes paramount significance. He has to be intimately bilingual – at the very least – and he must have a deep understanding of both the languages: source and target language. Due to several reasons, however, translation has not been used in Pakistan in spite of all of its utilities, such as its potential role in nation building, in promoting international confraternity and bridging linguistic gaps. The role of translation has been dubious in Pakistan as it hasn't risen on various occasions – such as separation of East Pakistan, Urdu-Pakhtun conflict in Karachi, insurgencies in Baluchistan etc. – where it was needed badly. Alamgir Hashmi has argued, "Our identity as Pakistanis is now tied to the indigenous language and to English" (47).

It is noticed that nationalism, at times, inoculates the biases of its peculiar nature into indigenous literatures. For instance, the narrow

nineteenth century nationalism restricted the creative corpus to the territory of a specific country. Led by nation state ideology, hatred for others and the fears of assimilation, it didn't let the writers go out of their literary circles. Susan Bassnet has rightly observed, "Comparative literature seems to have emerged as an antidote to nationalism, even though its roots went deeply into national culture" (21). From this remark, it must not be considered that comparative literature is anti-to-nationalism. It has its roots struck in national literature and culture.

In Indian and Pakistani context, it is directly linked to the rise of modern nationalism. It helps the writers of third world countries to imitate or borrow the ideas of west, and modify them in accord to their nationalist purposes. This kind of borrowing is not derogatory for them as it brings wider range to their experience and the corpus of literature. However, postcolonial Translation Studies offers an alternative perspective. Gayatri Spivak has opined, "In the act of wholesale translation into English there can be a betrayal of the democratic ideal into the law of the strongest" (Munday 133).

The usage of translation is conspicuous when it comes to have inter-cultural dialogues. For all its practical utilities, various theorists, translators and writers have laid emphasis on Translation Studies. Paul St. Pierre has stated, "The importance of translation can be located in the fact that translations bring the readers, writers and the critics of one nation into contact with those of the others, not only in the field of literature, but in all areas of human development" (Das 79). It is, for Bijay Kumar Das, "an empowering act, a nourishing act, and an act of affirmative play.....a life-force that ensures a literary text's survival" (116). It enables a nation to have itself for sound bilateral relations with international powers. Moreover, it prepares a country, through reading of foreign literature in its own language, for talks in United Nations and in other meetings all over the world. Furthermore, the nation gets ready to play its part in the emerging global village – modern world.

The translator must be perfect in the art of mimicry and "be able to act, as it were, the real author's part by impersonating his tricks of demeanour and speech, his ways and his mind, with the utmost degree of verisimilitude" (Nabokov 4). Arnold has mentioned the critic's task as, "to have always in one's mind the lines and expressions of the great writers, and to apply them as a touchstone to other poetry" (Bressler 26). It justifies the existence of translation as it helps the critics to have an

access to the classical literatures written in other languages. If a writer or a critic wants to read the Greek Drama, he has to rely on its translations, if his mother tongue is not Greek. Rudyard Kipling once wrote, “And what should they know of England who only England know?” (Kumar Das 125). If we go for structuralism, the binary oppositions make it crystal clear that no literature or society can be comprehended until and unless it is compared to some other society. Saussure makes it clear that things have no inherent meaning, and they only give meaning when seen in binary oppositions.

Comparative Literature: a robust source of international exposure:

The growth of comparative literature is directly associated to the spread of translation studies. It must not be feared that the existence of comparative literature might harm the national literature and culture. Like Plato, Mathew Arnold has implicit faith that literature is the reflection of the society in which it is written and ‘thereby heralds its values and concerns’ (Bressler 26). In the context of translation, the original text keeps its fidelity to its immediate society –that is national culture - beyond question while the translated work adapts the original text in accordance to its own culture i.e. target culture. Therefore, comparative literature and translation both strengthen the national culture as well as literature.

Translation helps us understand intertextuality. For instance, if we have to compare a Russian novel with that of an Urdu novel, we have to use English as medium. Translation makes it possible to bring the Russian novel into English language. The Urdu reader who does not know Russian language can easily read the novel, if he knows English, which was originally written in Russian language –that he doesn’t know. In this way, translation becomes a tool for reading comparative literature. It helps the writers, readers and critic in gaining a global perspective of their respective fields. With the help of translation, the readers can easily bring out the similarities from various texts – either translated or original.

Comparative Literature is indebted to a great deal to Translation Studies. However, it has been the dilemma of the translator that in the act of translation, an unending debate over the superiority of the original text over target text rises. Evan-Zohar, a translation theorist from Tel Aviv, has, in his paper *Translation Theory Today*, questioned the validity of the superiority of the original text over translation. He has written,

How many times have we been tortured by the clichés of the uninitiated, veteran or novice, that translation is never equal to the original, that languages differ from one another, that culture is ‘also’ involved with translation procedures, that when a translation is ‘exact’ it tends to be ‘literal’ and hence loses the ‘spirit’ of the original, that the ‘meaning’ of a text means both ‘content’ and ‘style’ and so on. Not to speak of such approaches where norms are either overtly or covertly stated, i.e. where we are told how translations should look or how they should be conceived of in terms of one or another evaluative norm (Kumar Das 127).

The torture of which Zohar has complained is the same as experienced by every translator. It should be made clear that the target language has no competition with the source language. The original text has its worth in accordance to the society for which, and influenced from which, it is written. The translated work aims at impressing the sensibility of target language so it has its own prestige. Both the texts – original and translated – have their literary and critical acclaim in their respective national literature and culture.

In the west, the history of translation studies begins with the Romans. Translation, for Eric Jacobsen, is a ‘Roman invention’ (Kumar Das 13). Cicero and Horace have influenced the successive translations to a greater extent. Both of them have discussed translation according to the two major functions of the poet; the universal human duty of seeking and disseminating wisdom and the special art of making and shaping a poem. Some of the critics have blamed the Romans for not being able to produce their own imaginative literature. Their loyalty to translation has brought this charge to them. This charge can be dismantled with the help of the views of critics. Aristotle has written in *Poetics* that all the arts are imitations. Longinus laid much emphasize on ‘a well read critic’ (Bressler 17).

Both Cicero and Horace have made distinction between word for word and sense for sense translation. In both the kinds, the role of translator is to be loyal to the form and style of poetry. The craft of the translator should be the judicious interpretation of the text of the source language as he is supposed to create a version of the target language. His purpose must be to protect the sense or meaning of the original text. The production of translated version should be concerned to the readers of

target language as it is the responsibility of translator to help them in understanding the original text through translation.

Translation was regarded as a 'Meta Text' by the Roman readers. They craved for the enrichment of their vocabulary, culture and national literature through the translations of Greek classics into Latin. Therefore the status of Roman translation is both imitative and creative. Furthermore it springs from a vision of the production of the corpus of works of literature that follows the established norms of excellence across linguistic boundaries.

George Steiner has given an acute division of the growth and development of translation in periods. He has dissevered the literature on theory, practice and history of translation into four periods. According to him, the first period is starts from the statements of Cicero and Horace on translation and ends in 1971, when A.F. Tytler published his essay on the *Principles of Translation*. The theories and statements about translation, in this period, directly come from the act of translating. The second periods lasts till 1946. It is characterized as a period of 'theory and hermeneutic enquiry with the development of a vocabulary and methodology of approaching translation' (Kumar Das 11).

The third period begins with the publication of the first papers on machine translations in the 1940s. It is labelled by the introduction of communication theory and structural linguistics into translation's study. The fourth period – which coexists with the third – has its origins in the 1960s. In it, there came 'a reversion to hermeneutic, almost metaphysical inquiries into translation and interpretation' (Kumar Das 11).

There is a comparative analysis of the translation in Renaissance and Romantic periods. The Renaissance translation made attempts to raise the status of translator's culture –which is target culture. The borrowing enriched the vocabulary, forms, styles and literary patterns of target language. The readers of target language were no longer oblivious of the developments made by source language. The new movements, literary trends and the creation of new works were duly brought to the knowledge of target language reader.

Contrary to it, the Romantic translations aimed at raising the status of works of source language. The attempts of strengthening source language culture restricted the activities of translators. The target language culture

became defensive to the stronger culture which, however, affected the production of translated works. In eighteenth century the translator was taken as painter or imitator. It would be interesting to note that in the early part of nineteenth century, two conflicting attitudes were seen. One accepts translation as a class of thought and the translator as a creative genius, enriching the literature and language into which he is translating. The other takes translation with its mechanical function which makes a text or author known.

If we take translation as a metaphysical riddle then it can be used as a mighty political weapon. It is a way of applying power to oneself. It is evident that with the spread of Christianity, the Bible translations were made on large scale. However, the spread of Christianity is indebted to the rise of colonialism. The bible translations were neither spiritual endeavours nor literary employments; they were clearly used for political defence. These translations were used by missionaries all over the world to spread and propagate the ideas of Christianity.

However, Skopos theory has brought a shift to translation studies from linguistic based translation to functionally and socio-culturally based translation. Translation is not accepted as a process but as a form of human action. For Skopos theorists, like all the human actions have a purpose, translation has an aim too. The outcome of translational action is *translatum*, which is the particular variety of target text. A text is taken as an offer of information made by an author to a reader. Translation is, thus, defined as offering information to the readers of one culture in target language about information originally offered in another language. Vermeer has written that a translation is a secondary offer of information, imitating a primary offer of information.

Hybridity of Cultures:

In the twenty first century, culture has become hybrid, mixed, all over the world. The influences of one culture on the other are more evident than ever. In contemporary Pakistani and Indian society, charms of Western culture are evident. Nationality is gradually but constantly yielding place to globalization. Cultural barrier is slowly breaking down. Edward Said has commented on this situation in his book *Culture and Imperialism*,

No one today is purely one thing. Labels like Indian, or woman, or Muslim, or American are no more than starting-points which, if followed in actual experience for only a moment, are quickly left behind. Imperialism consolidated the mixture of cultures and identities on a global scale. But its worst and most paradoxical gift was to allow people to believe that they were only, mainly, exclusively white, or black, or Western, or Oriental. No one can deny the persisting continuities of long traditions, sustained habitations, natural languages, and cultural geographies, but there seems no reason except fear and prejudice to keep insisting on their separation and distinctiveness as if that all human life was about. Survival in fact is about connections between things..... (Kumar Das 137).

The mixture of cultures and identities, of which Said is talking about, is something which justifies the need for translations. For him, survival depends on the connections between things which urge the existence of comparative literature. The reading of such literature is highly indebted to translation.

The aims of the translation have been different in all the periods of its development. The medieval translation was concerned with making society free. It aimed at the freedom of people from religious and political dogmas. The superstitions were manhandled with the help of translations of the scientific advancements in Muslim world. The translations of colonial period have been reactionary in their nature. They came as a reaction to the colonial forces which hurt the pride of indigenous national culture. The increasing national awareness made advancements in inter-lingual exchange.

In Pakistani context, the writers of 1950s onwards widely read Persian, Urdu and Arabic literatures. They translated from Arabic and Persian to Urdu language. These endeavours made the survival of Urdu in Pakistani society –in which the official language has been English since its creation- possible to such an extent that now Urdu literature is widely produced and translated into English. Unfortunately, the other regional languages of Pakistan have not been able to walk with the time. They have, neither, contributed to national narratives nor have they taken ideas from English or Urdu literature. The need for translation is greater than ever before in recent times. The reason for this is that we live in a multilingual and multicultural society where the need for interaction

between people of several linguistic backgrounds and cultures is necessary.

Julia Kristeva has stated that all texts are the translations of translations. It would be too naïve if people believe that translation is the transference of written discourse in source language into target language. Vijay Kumar Das has written, “Critics say that poetry is lost in the very act of creation” (4). In the light of this remark, it can be stated that even the act of jotting down the ideas is also translation. The thoughts are original and their written form is translation. For Plato, it is ‘twice removed from reality’ (Leitch 49). In this manner, every creation is the copy of original idea which, in reality, is the imitation of the idea of God. Robert Frost has also said that the poetry is what is lost in the act of creation.

Samuel P. Huntington’s *Clash of Civilizations* draws our attention towards the need of inter-cultural understanding. The harmony among different civilization, mutual understanding and tolerance can guarantee peace, and it can also eliminate “the fears of resistance on the side of reader” (Ricoeur 4). The rightful use of translation can help us in achieving these purposes. The translator has an ability to bring inter-cultural understanding, and can urge people for coexisting. The reading of different literatures, though translated, can broaden people’s minds and can play a significant role in shaping reliable ties between different peoples of world.

Translation helps people in understanding their past. It builds a connection between their past and present. Since all human beings have the same origins, it leads them to, if it is penned down as Plato would prefer it, the ultimate reality. The people, who were divided under the pressure of nationalism and religious conflicts, find translation helpful in reading about the lands which once belonged to them. The rise of nation states has played, as some critics prefer to put it, a nefarious role in dividing people. The division of Indian subcontinent has divided people into three nationalities who, once, were together.

The role of translation assumes great importance when it comes to building relation with other peoples. It makes the people aware of the traditions and the tongues of other peoples; thus playing its role in bringing people closer to one another. Through translation the international understanding and recognitions are achieved. It provides a platform for the projection of national culture on international level. For

instance, a novel which is written in Russian language has the essence of its immediate society. Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* provides a thorough understanding of human psychology as well as an insight into the norms and patterns of Russian culture. Its translation into Urdu would make the readers of target language aware of Russian culture. Thus it will create harmony among the peoples of both the countries.

Conclusion:

In the twenty first century, the world has become global, cultural barriers are breaking down and, the cultures of modern world seem to be hybrid. Every nation is striving hard to cope with the changing world. In this kind of scenario, the role of translation has pivotal importance. In Pakistani multi-lingual and multi-cultural society, there is a dire need to translate various literatures. It is the only way, to bridge the linguistic, social, cultural and political gaps. It can, if used properly, bring peoples of different origins closer to one another. Unfortunate events like the tragedy of December 16, 1971 – separation of East Pakistan i.e. the creation of Bangladesh – can be avoided in future if the linguistic crisis is curbed, and the linguistic rivalry is ended.

In spite of these tragic events, regretfully, there is no institutional approach in our society for the growth of Translation Studies. In academia, translation is not given the status which it deserves. Eventually, all the fields of creative productions, regretfully, seem to be working in watertight compartments. Their solitary working, somehow, tags them as narrow writings. Since Roman times, all the Golden Periods have been marked for their translations of foreign writings. Their tendency of borrowing ideas, structures and patterns from the 'other' literatures, remarkably, enriched their own corpus of literary and scientific works.

So, it can be suggested that translation should be used to deter the possible wars between nations, to enhance mutual relations by creating inter-cultural understanding and harmony, and by making people capable of accepting, celebrating, and believing in the differences between nations. Moreover, the scholars, government, and academia should realize the worth of translation in creating an environment, conducive to international confraternity.

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