

TRANSLATOR AND INTERPRETIVE COMMUNITY: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF शहरमेंकर्फ्यू AND ITS MARATHI AND ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

Abstract

Translation being an important socio-cultural phenomenon, especially in a diverse country, holds an important place for cultural and literary transfer. A text primarily is the result of an author's imagination, experiences and literary prowess. But a translation is a product of all these of two different entities, the author and the translator, whose interpretation of the source text (ST) decides the outcome which is the target text (TT). A translator, who is a reader, is influenced by his social and personal experiences. He is influenced by his Interpretive Community. This article would study the (re)interpretation of V N Rai's *Shaher Mein Curfew* in its Marathi and English translation with the help of a comparative study. The focus of the article is the translator's creativity, wherein the interpretation of the ST is considered as a communal affair, and the view that the reading of the translator is influenced by interpretive community.

Keywords: Interpretive community, influence and creativity

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I. INTRODUCTION

An important social cultural phenomenon, translation acts as a bridge between cultures, languages, and literatures in a multilingual Nation like ours. A text is a product of the imagination of an author, both social and personal. Likewise, a translation is the result of reader-translator's imagination which is social or experiential. Translator's popular interests, beliefs, and values play an important role in the making of the target text (TT) and the enquiry and interpretations that go along with it. The text in itself, to certain extent, controls the reader-translator's response to it but the target text, i.e. the meaning of the source text (ST) that the translator arrives at develops in the reading process. "If the role of writer is to defamiliarize, the role of the reader is to familiarize, if the role of the writer is to deconstructing the language, the role of the reader is to reconstruct it. No text is meaningful in itself."¹ So we can say that the job of the reader-translator is to familiarise an unknown or less known culture and its concerns to the target reader.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

An interpretation means a particular version of a work or an opinion about that work. While talking about a work of literature, interpretation is the meaning that a reader or a critic comes up with. Translator performs a dual process of interpreting the text and re-iterating that interpretation while translating the same. The TT is thus thrice removed from the ST by the time it is read by the target reader. Translation tries to represent all the elements of the source from literary, cultural, to social. The organisation of society and its functioning considers its culture, language as well as literature, at the same time it also depends on the writer how and what he or she considered to be social. It can be a representation of the underprivileged or their upliftment, a representation of an individual or a community, a representation of the traditional as well as the experimental.

शहरमेंकर्फ्यू does not just deal with the riots but also talks about the why, how, and what of it. It also portrays the suffering of people during riots and exposes the fun that the powerful derive from such situations. When it first appeared on the literary scene it invited a lot of frowns, yet it is one of the finest narratives we have about riots. The author, Vibhuti Narain Rai, born on 28th November 1951, was an IPS officer and the Vice-Chancellor of Mahatma Gandhi Antarrashtriya Hindi Vishwavidhyalaya. He has been honoured by Indu Sharma Antarrashtriya Katha Samman. His job took him to various sensitive districts and this novel is a rendering of his experience. This novel has been translated into more than ten languages and is widely read.

The novel is a short yet strong narrative about a city during curfew. It is a good example of aptly creative use of language to express kinds of emotions and thoughts. This novel is well appreciated for its content but the use of language and experimentation done with it impresses the Reader and informs the Reader about the way the author captures the ethos of a curfew laden city and the mental condition of the people living in it. The novel has been translated into more than ten languages but in this case we will be looking at the Marathi translation कर्फ्यू (TT-1) done by Sharyu Pednekar and the English translation *Curfew in the City* (TT-2) done by C M Naim.

शहरमेंकफ्यू is a brilliant work of language where the circumstances and situations come alive by just reading the text. The reader can easily visualise the depiction of events and the language is rich with figures of speech and rightfully add the flavour of the place and the ethos. The author has taken great care to capture the minutest details of the characterization, of the place, of the dialogues, and everything which makes the translation of the novel a challenging task. The author delves deep into the psyche of human beings.

III. ANALYSIS

In this article we will be looking at the different aspects of translation with the help of शहरमेंकफ्यू as an instance to realize and analyze certain issues of translation, translator, and the influences. We will look at how this text located in a Hindi speaking locality gets translated into English and Marathi, what all changes it undergoes and the reason for the same. And for this we will cite some examples from the text and its translations and present them along with their analysis.

- Pg. 13 “फसादकारिहर्सल” ST
Pg. 15 “रंगीततालीम” TT-1

‘रिहर्सल’ is an English term that is used in the ST which is as matter of fact retained in TT-2 but in TT-1 it is translated well into a native term, that clarifies the idea of rehearsal. It also implies the Target Reader consciousness of the translator.

- Pg. 14 “डेढघंटे” ST
Pg. 16 “दीडतासात” TT-1
Pg. 18 “ninety minutes” TT-2

The hour form of mentioning time in ST and TT-1 is converted to minutes in TT-2 in order to stress upon the urgency and to make it a more valuable asset. Time is money as is said, a very Western idea. Here in India, time takes a more ‘leisurely’ walk. When we talk of minutes it creates a sense of the small bit of time that we have and when we say ‘hour’ that generates a sense of plenty. So here Naim translates or rather takes the decision keeping in mind the Target Reader. So meaning gets translated according to culture, as a cultural concept.

- Pg. 16 “एकसाथकईजगहों करलिएजाते” ST
Pg. 18 “एकाचवेळीकाही पकडूननेत” TT-1
Pg. 20 “No one had been Penal Code.” TT-2

In TT-1 some of the details given in the ST are removed. The politics of removing details plays an important role. The details that give authenticity to the character, language and culture are missed out in TT-1 which results in a loss of informational transfer, though many a times it does not incur a loss on meaning of the text. It can be implied that skipping or missing out on details in the translation incur cultural loss, and sometimes loss of meaning. In this instance the translator misses out on the fact that people kept arms with them in spite of the fact that they were supposed to surrender them to the police due to riots. This may be an

accidental skip of information, but this information does add to the seriousness of the issue in the ST.

- Pg. 20 “सराबोर” ST
- Pg. 20 “गुडघ्यापर्यंत” TT-1
- Pg. 24 “drenched from cap to boot” TT-2

TT-1 implies that the people were drenched till their knees whereas ST says that people were completely wet, from top to bottom. Not finding an appropriate term in TT-1 the translator sticks to the nearest, an influence of TL and TC. So here TL serves as context for the choice that the translator practices in TT-1.

- Pg. 23 “दो- एकलोगों लेली” ST

This sentence is left out/not translated in TT-1, which is a significant phase of the scene that is developing. Removing of such sentences that lead to plot development may incur loss of the feel of the ST in the TT. Again this depends on the choices that the translator makes while translating, as it directly points to the issue of interpretation.

- Pg. 24-25 “चारपाईकेइर्द-गिर्द सोचरहीथी” ST
- Pg. 24 “त्यातल्याकाही तयारनव्हत्या” TT-1
- Pg. 27 “The people gathered women.” TT-2

TT-1 is unable to describe what the ST is trying to say. The situation in the ST in the present sentence is very intense and tragic. And because TT-1 changes the sentence and the meaning the tragic effect and intensity are watered down.

- Pg. 25 “उनकेशरीरहौलेहौले ... तेजकापनेलगता” ST
- Pg. 24 “रडणेआणिशरीराची तुटतहोती” TT-1
- Pg. 27 “Their bodies were rapidly.” TT-2

TT-1 is incomplete in sense as it captures just half of the situation. The verbal picture that the author creates in the ST is not transferred to the reader of TT-1. As mentioned in the introduction the ST is rich from the context of use of language as well as imagery. In the present instance the author creates a visual image, which due to half capture, is not replicated in TT-1. Of course the target reader may not be aware of the image. Here arises the question as to whether sticking to the source image is important or the sense of transfer is important.

- Pg. 26 “अचानकवहइतनाबुढाहोगया ...लगी” ST

This sentence is missed out in TT-1. It is important thematically, as it is the first instance where the theme of the novel starts generating its gravity, but its essence is not translated in TT-1. Here comes the question of the translator’s decision making and creativity. What the translator feels important to be translated is transferred and also what the translator understands is transferred, so the translator has a responsibility but still s/he is a creator allowed to work according to his/her will and understanding of the ST.

- Pg. 29 “दरअसलकफरू ... आरहेथे” ST
Pg. 28 “खरेतरकफरू ... पाहतहोते” TT-1
Pg. 32 “But, in fact, there ... the Nakkhas.” TT-2

The imagery of this novel is a very powerful tool that the author uses to expose the sub-text, the theme of the novel. But in this instance the TT-1 misses some of the imagery. This can be taken as an example, specifying that two languages belonging to the same country cannot carry such literary tools and also it depends on the decision of the translator.

- Pg. 33 “deathly silent” TT-2

The use of the word ‘deathly’ is an instance of the translator’s knowledge of SL and TL as well as the situation that it describes in the ST. The meaning takes a logical form in TT-2 so that the whole concept is transferred along with its implications.

- Pg. 33 “अल्लाहसबठीककरेगा” ST
Pg. 32 “अल्लाहसबठीककरेगा” TT-1
Pg. 36 “Allah shall take care of everything.” TT-2

In TT-1 the Hindi ST is borrowed. This is one of the most recurrently used tools in TT-1. Many of the sentences are directly borrowed from the ST in TT-1. The use of borrowing in this manner and to such an extent may easily make the target reader come very close to the ST.

- Pg. 36 “कॉमिकरिलीफ” ST
Pg. 34 “कॉमिकरिलीफ (ताणपरिहार)” TT-1
Pg. 39 “comic relief” TT-2

‘Comic relief’ is an English word used by the narrator for a new character that enters the scene. It is obvious that TT-2 would retain the term, but in TT-1 the term is borrowed and just for the sake of clarity it is explained in Marathi in brackets. This explanation given in brackets also shows the influence of translator’s interpretive community as there is satisfaction of understanding only after the term is explained, otherwise any English knowing reader would understand the ST, but the translator wants the common non-English reader to understand the concept of ‘comic relief’.

- “Arrey, lala..”, “Arey, chachi...”, “Musallas(pejorative, abbreviation of Musalman), “Hey bhagwan”

All these are borrowed from the ST in TT-2 for the effect that they create in ST. All these terms and ways of referring to people give a peculiar regional flavor to the text and that is what the translator tries to maintain in TT-2. Also worth noticing is if terms like ‘Musallas’ is not borrowed and translated into the sophisticated one, i.e. Musalman, the sub-text that the word tries to highlight, the development of a character that takes place due to this word will be missed out in TT-2.

- Pg. 35 “अरेचाची, शहरमेंलाशहीलाशहै” “कितनीलाशेतोहमारेपैरकेनीचेआतेआतेबची” TT-1

In this instance the ST is borrowed as it is, so that the peculiarity of situation and character is retained and expressed in the TT. On the other hand there arises a question as to how much retention of the original text in its translation can be allowed?

- Words like “mohalla”, “sasur”, “Daroghaji” are borrowed from the ST in T-2.
- Pg. 40 “हिन्दू-पुलिसभाई-भाई ... आई” ST
Pg. 37 “हिंदू-पुलिस ... आयी” TT-1

Pg. 43 “Hindu-pulis ... kahan se ai” “The Hindus ... from? (Katuakaum ... people)”

TT-2 borrows the ST and then translates in English and gives explanation of the term ‘katuakaum’. So there are three processes taking place, borrowing, translating and explaining. An interesting instance where the translation gives the reader an option to choose from and at the same time applies all the possibilities that come to him/her while decision making. It is difficult to say if this example shows the confusion of translator, about sticking to ST or TR.

- Pg. 45 “यूसुफतुमसंघर्षकरो, हमतुम्हारेसाथहै” ST
Pg. 42 “यूसुफतुमसंघर्षकरो ... साथहै” TT-1
Pg. 48 “Yusuph, tum ... your side.” TT-2

In this instance as well TT-1 retains the original text whereas TT-2 borrows the original, translates it as well. The translator indulges in the dual process of borrowing and explaining or translating in order to explain the borrowed. Borrowing leads to a flavor of the original to the TR and additionally explaining the ST to him/her, for more of cultural learning/information. Again TR consciousness plays an important role here and influences the process of choice making.

- Pg. 60 “लड़कीकेआजकल... सुबहछहबजे ... नौकरीथी” ST
Pg. 53 “मुलगीहल्ली ... सहावाजता ... होती” TT-1
Pg. 62 “... promptly at 5:45” TT-2

In many instances of translation we notice changes of facts. Change in numbers, dates, relationships etc. Some of them really harm the interpretation and in an Indian text if things like relationships change then it would affect the meaning as well.

- Pg. 60 “एकहीरस्ते ... आखेंमुहावरेकीभाषामेंलड़गई” ST
Pg. 53 “एकाचरस्त्यानेजाताजाता ... संभाषणहोई” TT-1
Pg. 61 “One morning, ... bumped into each other.” TT-2

In both the TTs the idiom is translated in different ways. In TT-1 the idiom gives us the idea of talking with the help of eyes and in TT-2 it says in brackets what the ST says, i.e. आँखेलड़गई— eyes bumped into each other, which is more or less literal translation and keeping it in inverted commas is a technique that the translator uses to emphasize on the idea of eyes

meeting suggesting development of feelings in the characters. So ST meaning works as reference in TT-1 and as a cultural concept of idiom, which are language specific, in TT-2.

- Pg. 65 “मेंतुम्हारी ... जानेदो” “चोप्पसाली! ... हैं” ST
- Pg. 57 “मेंतुम्हारी ... जानेदो” “चोप्पसाली! ... हैं” TT-1
- Pg. 65 “Bhaiya I’m your sister ... go!” “Shut up, Sali. We f..sisters.” TT-2

TT-1 retains the original Hindi sentence, without any kind of translation element. In TT-2 the abusive words that are pronouns turn into action verbs; an important phenomenon that occurs when there is cultural transfer. As against this idea the same pronouns of ST could have been replicated by literally translating the terms, as is seen in many texts.

- Pg. 71 “हेमौला, मेरी माँभेजे” ST
- Pg. 63 “हेमौला, माझ्या पाठवलस?” TT-1
- Pg. 71 “Hey Maula ... this home?” TT-2

TT-1 borrows the word ‘maula’ and TT-2 borrows ‘maula’ and ‘bitiya’. Again, the case here is ‘maula’ can be translated into Lord, God, Almighty, etc and ‘bitiya’ as Daughter. The use of ‘maula’ specifies the communal belonging of the character and also the word ‘bitiya’ lends that regional flavor to the language of the character even in TT-2. The ethnicity of the characters travel to the TT-2 and thus to the TR, which is very important.

- Pg. 74 “झूठतोनहीं... देंगे” ST
- Pg. 64 “खोटेबोलतनाहीसना घालू” TT-1
- Pg. 74 “We’ll check right now your ass” TT-2

The word for ‘ass’ in ST and TT-1 is very offensive and hence it is just suggested, whereas ‘ass’ can be easily used in TT-2 to complete the meaning, explicitly. This also suggests the influence of culture on translation.

- Pg. 85 “दिल्लीसेलखनऊ ... लोगहै” ST
- Pg. 75 “दिल्लीते आहेत” TT-1
- Pg. 86 “Delhi or Lucknow...line)” TT-2

TT-1 is unable to capture the sense that people wear khaki half-shorts under their trousers and TT-2 clearly states the implication of this statement, that it’s a reference to belonging to RSS. This shows the influence of knowledge of Naim on the TT-2, which also brings in the interpretive community as Pednekar could not state it.

IV. CONCLUSION

The above analysis brings to the fore many perspectives of literary translation. There are examples that justify the idea that the reader/translator is influenced by his interpretive community and it works on his decision or choice making process and then there are examples that simply portray the creative freedom that both the translators have practiced in order to justify the text, subtext and the excellence of the author’s creativity. There are

examples of borrowing, language or code mixing and switching. Wherever we find the influence of the interpretive community of the translator or the TR in action it becomes explicit in many ways like portrayal of meaning as culture, as logical form, as context, as reference, as conceptual structure, as a consciousness of the TR and issues of interpretation. There are examples that also show negligence, casualness on the part of translators where either the meaning or the structure suffers, especially when some part of the text is skipped in translation.

As we saw in the analysis many of the examples cited portray the influence of the interpretive community on the reader/translator which enriches the translation in many of the instances. Many examples also show that creative freedom exercised by the translator can enrich the text and also the experience of translation. There are many interesting processes taking place within the periphery of translator's creativity. It also leads to upliftment of translation from just a transfer to a creative process, which ultimately would lead to some negotiation in the inferior status given to translations.

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