

The Need and Importance of Translation and the Role of English Language

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Abstract: Translation is an act of expression of ideas and feelings from one language to another. Translation of a text is meant to spread the knowledge available in one language to the readers of another language. English, being an international language, plays a vital role in this context. English is a language in which almost all literary and scientific works need to be first translated. In whole of the world, the books translated into English are mostly read and digested. English has given wide scope to the writers, translators and readers of the whole world. It is general curiosity of the wise readers to read the books written in the languages other than their reach. English fulfils this desire of the readers. This curiosity and interest have necessitated the translation work in global scenario. English translation has given rebirth to the literatures written in other languages. The paper intends to focus on the importance of translation and the role of English language in depth and detail along with illustrating some great classics of India.

Keywords: Translation, English, Language

English language plays a vital role in providing the translated books to the wide readers by bringing them to the global platform. English is known as a 'window to the world' as well as a 'library language', so fortunately the mission of translating books into English has been successful. The popularity of books and availability of them in English have proved translation work as a source of creating a knowledge bank for children, youth and old alike. It is the magic of translation that the *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, *Puranas*, *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, *Bible*, *Kuran* are available in all major languages of the world and the people of all religions and races imbibe the knowledge from them. It is translation that day to day causes increase in number of the readers. The readers find the books of their choice of language in market and enhance knowledge of the world literature. The literary works of Shankaracharya, Kalidas, Tulsidas, Kabirdas, Surdas, Meerabai, Tukaram and Vidyapati are available in English. Not only the readers of Sanskrit language but of the English too, know well the themes of *Vivekchuramani* (of Shankaracharya); *Raghuvansham*, *Meghdutam* and *Kumrasambhavam* (of Kalidasa). They know well the devotional love and sacrifice of Tulsidas, Kabirdas, Meerabai, Tukaram and Vidyapati. The famous novels and stories of Premchand and influential poems of Ramdhari Singh Dinkar have been translated into English. All major works of the above writers are unparallel in the world literature. They have been prescribed in the schools, colleges and universities in English translation. They have been the immortal treatises for all generations. English translation has given

rebirth to the literatures written in other languages. English language plays a pivotal role in providing the translated books to the wide readers by bringing them to the global platform. English is known as a 'window to the world' as well as a 'library language', so fortunately the mission of translating books into English has been successful. The popularity of books and availability of them in English have proved translation work as a source of creating a knowledge bank for children, youth and old alike. It has equal significance in all fields of human existence. Some of the important fields of translation are: education, international relations, business, media, social and cultural understanding and tourism.

Education: Education is the backbone of a nation and knowledge should not be confined to one language or one nation. In order to facilitate the readers of other languages, translation of the particular book and document from their original language into other languages is necessary. Translation helps in bringing the social, economic, scientific and literary development of a nation to the masses. Developments and discoveries in the fields of science and technology are known to all through translation. Translation makes one access to the literature of various languages of the world. Today books are written in all languages. And no one knows all languages. But people need to acquire knowledge available in other languages too. Translation is only option to provide the knowledge to all aspirants. English plays a vital role in it because of being an international language. The famous and award winning books are translated into various languages of the world so that people of other languages can also be benefitted by the message and significance of those works. Ancient classical works of the world have been translated into all major languages of the world. And people in large get acquainted with their eternal values as well as the aesthetic pleasure.

The *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, *Gita*, *Ramayana*, *Bible*, *Kuran* all have been translated into other languages from their original languages for the welfare of humanity. The hymns of the *Vedas*, knowledge of the *Upanishads*, philosophy of the *Gita*; suffering and sacrifices of Sri Rama, Sita and Lakshman for welfare of humanity; the hymns and story of the *Bible*; and the message of *Kuran* have reached the masses through the vehicle of translation. The *Vedas* are the oldest treasure house of knowledge in human history. They are not meant for spiritual knowledge only. They contain all essential knowledge for the survival of mankind. There are a number of contemporary Vedic scholars in India who have made commentaries on the *Vedas* in which Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Sri Aurobindo, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Sri Ram Sharma Acharya stand apart. All of them have tried to simplify the hidden meaning of the *Vedas*. For the language of the *Vedas* is too difficult to understand by the general readers because of their symbolism and plurality of names. One word has different connotations and hymns are so written that general readers confuse to correlate one hymn with the other. Swami Dayanand Saraswati in his commentary has tried to establish a fact that though there are numerous gods in the *Vedas* but they all are One, the Absolute. There are four *Vedas*- *Rig Veda*, *Sam Veda*, *Yajur Veda* and *Atharva Veda*. Sri Aurobindo writes that:

We have in the Rig Veda, -- the true and only Veda in the estimation of European scholars, -- a body of sacrificial hymns couched in a very ancient language which presents a number of almost insoluble difficulties. It is full of ancient forms and words which do not appear in later speech and have often to be fixed in some doubtful sense by intelligent conjecture;... (Aurobindo 3-4)

But at the same time he clarifies that the hymns of the Vedas “have had the most splendid good fortune in all literary history. They have been the reputed source not only of the world's richest and profoundest religions, but of some of its subtlest metaphysical philosophies. ... The name borne by them was Veda, the knowledge, - the received name for the highest spiritual truth of which the human mind is capable. (Aurobindo 5) In whole of the human history *Vedas* are treated most pious works of Indian Rishis. The hymns of the Vedas, as the Rishis meant, were “a means of spiritual progress”. Upanishads are the end of Vedic knowledge. “Upanishads, increasingly clear and direct in their language are the fountainhead of the highest Indian thought.” (Aurobindo 16) Gradually Puranas became popular among the people because of clarity in themes and common language. In course of time Buddhism took birth in India. One of the reasons of the birth of Buddhism was the sacrifice and lack of social harmony. Buddhism “... sought to abolish the Vedic sacrifice and to bring into use the popular vernacular in place of the literary tongue.” (Aurobindo 16) Spirituality ever strengthened in Indian thought. Shankaracharya showed a new path of acquiring Vedic knowledge. About him it is said that, “At the age of eight he had mastered the four Vedas; at twelve he was versed in all *sutras*; at sixteen he completed writing his *Bhashya*; and at thirty-two he departed this world”. (qtd. Mahadevan 8) After Gautam Buddha, it was Shankaracharya who observed some demerits in Hinduism. But he did not believe in establishing a new religion.

From Badri and Kedara, to Ramesvaran and Kanyakumari, Sankara made his tours, re-establishing the ancient *Dharma*, renewing its spirit and removing the excrescences that had crept into it in course of time. (Mahadevan 41)

Shankaracharya has made great commentaries on the Upanishads and the *Bhagvad-gita*. His *Vivekachudamani* is of great significance. It is he who tried to define Brahman in his words:

The omniscient, omnipotent cause from which occur the origination, sustenance and destruction of this world which is manifest as name and form, which is associated with many agents and enjoyers, which is the abode of fruits regulated in accordance with place, time and action and the structure of which is by mind inconceivable, that is Brahman. (Brahma Sutra Bhashya 1, i, 2, Trans. Mahadevan 78-79)

In the commentary on the *Bhagvad-gita* he explains that “*Moksha* is for the man of wisdom who has renounced desire and who strives for it, and not for the one who has not renounced and has desires.” (ii, 70 Trans. Mahadevan 107). Bhakti Movement revolutionised the Indian minds. Devotional poets came in lime light and enriched Hindi as well as the regional languages with their devotional poems. Guru Nanak, Kabir Das, Ravidas, Chaitanya, Tulsi Das, Meera Bai, Tukaram are some of the

great exponents of the Movement who gave new directions to disordered Indian society. Guru Nanak founded the Sikh religion and travelled far and wide to reach his message of brotherhood and One God. For him there is no difference between a Hindu and a Muslim, all are the offspring of One Almighty. He raised voice of “suffering and anguish” for all alike.

The cardinal principles of Guru Nanak's teachings are a strict monotheism, and the vision of the immanence of God in all creation. Devotion or Bhakti (love of the Supreme Being) forms the pivotal part of the spiritual process in his teaching. The main steps of spiritual ascent emphasized in his teaching are *suniyai* (listening to or absorbing holy teaching), *mannei* (reflection) and *dhyana* (deep meditation). To these is added the spirit of service of humanity and compassion, without which the spiritual quest is not complete. (Talib 11-12)

Nanak's contribution to Indian society is invaluable. He “...created a new vision, new values and a society with its own ethos and a great role in history. Remaining all his life a quietist teacher, he yet imparted a vision of such dynamism as shook long-established thrones, and contributed to the world a faith imbued with the spirit of idealism, service and sacrifice.” (Talib 17). Kabir, the founder of Kabir Panthi, believing in Nirgun Brahman (God without Attributes) greatly influenced the Indian society by his teachings. His couplets filled with essence of his teachings, please every ear. It is only Kabir, throughout history, whose contribution is realised in all three religions: Hinduism, Sikhism and Islam. Tulsi Das, a great exponent of Hinduism and propounder of Sagun Brahman (God with Attributes) enriched Hindi literature with his great compositions: the *Sri Ramcharitmanas*, one of the great epics of the world, *Vinay Patrika*, *Hanuman Chalisa*, etc. *Sri Ramcharitmanas* and *Hanuman Chalisa* are revered and recited in every Hindu family. Meera Bai's song-verses are a remarkable contribution to devotional literature of India. Sacrificing the wealth and comfort of her palace and wandering to religious places singing song-verses in praise of her love God, Lord Krishna created a new kind of devotion.

Meera Bai was not a reformer or preacher like Kabir, nor did she present a special world-view like Tulsi Das. She accepted all the tenets of bhakti and followed them unwaveringly all her life. Like most devotees, her ultimate goal was the release from the cycle of birth and rebirth, and to be united with the Supreme Being, who for her was symbolized in the human, personal, beatific, and joyous form of Krishna. (Nilsson 21)

Tukaram's *abhangas* (lyrics) are sung in Maharashtra as that of the couplets of Kabir in Northern India. Tukaram was a rebel devotee. His contribution to Marathi literature is outstanding. He did not believe in leaving the world aside for attainment of salvation. For him Self is as important as the Super Self.

Throughout his life, he had refused to be consoled until wisdom dawned upon him, and it is in the name of mankind that he suffered. Thus his poems achieved a form and sensibility which is modern. The spiritual experiences through which he passed are common to all mortals. (Nemade 41)

The spiritual pilgrimages of all the above devotional poets impart great lessons to mankind. All of their works took the journey of translation to reach the masses in which the role of English is inevitable.

International Relations: International relations of a nation are of prime importance. In the age of globalisation every nation has competition with other nations in terms of economic growth and developments in the fields of science and technology. Every nation is in rush to rise in the form of a Superpower. It is translation that awakens us with such information. Every country has its own national language but only that language does not suffice on all occasions. In a country like India, where there are numerous languages spoken, translation is required for national purpose. On international level, world leaders are required to use a common language, i.e. English. The drafts and documents of one language are translated into English for international understanding. All international dialogues take place in English. Thus English plays dominant role in external affairs.

Business: Trade and commerce plays pivotal role in development of a country. For multinational companies translation is very important. They have their offices, partners and clients in many countries where different languages are in use. Their contracts are written in their national languages but for clarification in dealing they are translated into English. Such translation needs accuracy and quality. Translation of legal, scientific, technical and medical documents is carried out by professional translators. A good translator needs to have command over three things: (i) He should know the source language in which the text has been written; (ii) He should know the target language in which he has to translate the text; and (iii) He should have good knowledge of subject matter that he has to deal with during translation. Being a bilingual is not enough for a successful translator. If one has to translate the legal documents, he must have knowledge of legal terminology. In the same way a translator of scientific, technical, medical and literary subjects must have the knowledge of particular subject. A translator of literary knowledge can't be a successful translator of medical, technical or scientific subjects. In business, translation helps in breaking the language barriers and helps in development of a business on international level.

Media: Media are called the fourth pillar of democracy. They are responsible to acquaint the people with the happenings around the world. News is collected from 'local bodies' and 'regional centres' and then translated into the target language before bringing it to the public. Both print and electronic media are operating in all parts of the world. Translation helps them to present the news of other languages in their own language. Without translation a nation can be aloof from the entire world. In the global phenomenon it occupies a very important place. Anne D. Cordero observes that:

The need for translation is especially acute in our modern world. Not only do nations depend on it to bridge what would otherwise be an impossible communication gap, but it also affords access to a wealth of scientific and technical information, as well as to the ideas that help shape our society. (350)

Social and Cultural Aspects: India is a multilingual and multicultural country. And cultural knowledge of a culture is preserved in its own language. People willing to settle in other region or country of different culture need to know that culture first in order to stay there comfortably. They know another culture through the records provided in their own language. Translation is a medium to help them to fulfil their desires. It is translation that various art forms are known to the people of other languages and cultures. Indian music is played in the street of London, New York, Pakistan, Nepal, Afghanistan and in so many other countries. In the same way Indian movies are watched there. These are possible only because of the art of translation. The folk literature of one culture is studied by the people of other cultures in translated form. It is translation that the myths and legends of ancient India are known to the people of whole world. Translation is a socio-cultural bridge between the varied cultures and nations. Today's globalised and technologically advanced age has brought revolution in society. Translation has become inevitable part of life. On social networking sites people use chatting and increase friends of similar profession. Sitting at one place they use to contact the people of other countries. Though their mother tongues are different but due to translation (in mind) they succeed in their endeavour. Translation helps in online order of all household commodities, books etc. There are endless jobs where translation helps one in living the life with peace and comfort. All these reasons have helped in making Cultural Studies as a subject of study in higher education.

Tourism: Tourism is a source of generating revenue for a nation. In this sector translation is of great importance. People coming from different countries, speaking different languages, need detailed information of their destinations. Translation serves this purpose. At tourist places translators or interpreters (in the name of guides) are of great demand. They make tourists know everything in detail about the tourist places. They guide them and keep them away from being cheated and tricked. The above study and observations signify the need and importance of translation where English plays the most dominating role. Translation helps nations to have strong relations with each other and develop brotherhood, peace and harmony by sharing knowledge. It has evolved as a means for attaining spiritual knowledge and material prosperity, the two pillars of modern age. Such prominence has made Translation Studies a fascinating discipline in higher education.

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