

Translation in Literature: A Creative and Truth Pursuing Process

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Abstract: Translation in literature with its truth pursuing nature and divine origin is the knowledge generating process moving towards the realization of higher values in the evolutionary process. Being a knowledge promoting power, literary translation gives a new life to the text as it emancipates it from the bondages of literalism and slavish imitation, hence in its holistic perspective it becomes a truth seeking power. While translating a literary text, the translator does not concentrate on literal meaning of the words, but takes various implications of the word into consideration and thereby with its creative energy generates a new meaning. In literature translation becomes operative with its emphasis on creativity as the translator has access to some sort of universal sense of meaning whose essence is reflected in the translated text. A true or faithful translator favors the recreation of the aesthetic beauty. Literary translation provides a new life to a text through the creative process of cross fertilization, therefore translation in literature becomes a life giving force as it crosses the authorial boundaries of the source text.

Keywords: Creative power, de-familiarization, evolutionary process, literariness, recreation, source text, target text.

Translation with its unique truth pursuing nature emerging from its divine origin in evolutionary shape of creative reconstruction contributes significantly to the knowledge generating process moving towards the realization of those higher values which are essentially required for the social harmony, peace, prosperity, religious tolerance, sustainable development, broad ethical and spiritual vision of the modern multicultural, multiethnic and multiracial global world. This divine activity of translation exhibits the apex of its potentiality with its free and holistic application in literature when a source text through the process of decoding and recoding is translated into the target text, thereby creating a new text with deconstructionist reconstruction. Going back to Plato's philosophy and taking the world as a translated text of an idea, literary translation takes an insight into the 'base' that exists before the source/ original text and from this base sprouts its creative offshoots of truth pursuing nature leading towards the fresh flowering of knowledge. Taking a step ahead and highlighting the truth pursuing and creative nature of translation Jacques Derrida rightly asserts that "the origin of philosophy is translation or the thesis of translatability" (Derrida, 1985:120). In this way translation becomes a knowledge promoting power by giving light to ignorance/darkness, voice to silence and presence to absence in its evolutionary move, hence it provides a new life to literary texts as they are

reborn with fresh energy when translator becomes most faithful to the true meaning by being unfaithful to specific meaning of the text in the process of creative reconstruction. Translation in literature with its emphasis on promoting the original text with free approach taking fresh energy from the unconscious gets itself emancipated from the bondages of literalism and slavish imitation and with its creative urge gives a new birth to a literary work in the receiving culture/language. A literary text when unpacked or analyzed symptomatically leads to the philosophical premise that there exists a 'base' or 'origin' prior to deep/surface structure what Eugene Nida calls 'the word of God' and Noam Chomsky terms as 'innate structure of human brain'. The concept of literariness adopted by early translation studies scholars giving the same reflection also links translation to the hierarchical nature of culture. Therefore, taking an insight into the 'origin' or 'base', the translator, as Gentzler thinks, has to "analyze not just what the text explicitly says but also what it does not say or says only by implication" (Gentzler, 3). In other words it is what Jonas Zdzienicka terms 'creative solitude'. Thus, translation in literature with its creative and truth pursuing mission by crossing natural, cultural and linguistic boundaries in the modern world has become so crucial that critics like Paul Engle in *Forward to Writing from the World II* (1985) realizing its importance in the contemporary world emphatically writes that:

As the world shrinks together like an aging orange and all peoples in all cultures move closer together (however reluctantly and suspiciously), it may be that the crucial sentence for our remaining years on earth may be very simply: TRANSLATE OR DIE The lives of every creature on the earth may one day depend on the instant and accurate translation of one word. (Engle & Engle, 2)

The various contemporary theories of translation through the process of rationalization also arrive at the conclusive point that translation in literature when taken in its holistic perspective is virtually a truth seeking power. But this exercise is not an easy task as I.A. Richards, the pioneer of new criticism who brought translation within its ambit with its emphasis on formulating the *non-dit*, in his essay "Towards a Theory of Translating" asserts that the process of translation "may very probably be the most complex type of event yet produced in the evolution of the cosmos." (Richards, 250). In literary translation the translator subverts the fixed ways and adopting the new ways of seeing at the text creates a new text out of the given text /original text, not identical to the original text, hence literary text gets a new life of its own in the process of translation. Ezra Pound's theory of translation based upon the concept of energy in language also substantiates the point as he takes words not on the pages but as sculpted images and these key images, as Donald Davie in *Pound* (1975) says, are expression of "energy inherent in all material things" (Davie, 67). Therefore, material objects are viewed as charged with energy, hence the meaning of a word of art is dynamic as it changes with the change of language, so language gets a life of its own with a power to adapt, mutate and survive. Thus, apart from the translation in literal sense

Pound propounds the concept of free translation which does not mean freedom of interpretation but to create new relation in the present. Poundian belief is that the meaning is always already located in the historical flux which the translator has to recreate keeping in view the 'atmosphere'. Therefore, while translating a literary text the translator should keep in mind that the translation process in literature does not concentrate on literal meaning of the words but the various implications of the word in its 'verbal manifestation' and language gets its energy in creating a new meaning in the atmosphere. In this way Pound used translation as a tool in the cultural struggle as a result of which Euro-American translation of 60s and 70s provided translation a new life and energy as it converted the prevailing taste and cultural conception in North-American society. Therefore, human language being innovative and additive moving backward and forward trapped in intertextual network creates a new text in literary translation. In this way Pound freed translation from the bondages of literalism and literal correspondence methodologies with his emphasis to promote the original text with free approach as Ronnie Apter in *Digging for the Treasure : Translation After Pound* (1984) remarks in favour of this free approach:

Pound's innovations have freed modern translation from slavish adherence to sense for sense, rhyme for rhyme and meter for meter. Instead, they turn to a battery of ad hoc strategies (often strategies by Pound) on the original poem in an attempt to give critical insight into why the original poem has importance to them. (Apter,75)

Pound's concept of the intuitive universal language revolutionized the field of translation as it occupied a central place among American literary translators ,consequently it was recognized as a unique contribution made by American Workshop approach as it enabled the translators to peep into the black-box of human mind (unconscious) reflecting the working and reworking of unconscious during the process of translation, resultantly translated text appeared as creatively literary work in the receiving culture / language. Thus in the field of translation the term 'creative translation' becomes operative with its emphasis on creativity which leads translation to the belief that the best translators have access to some sort of universal sense of meaning whose essence is transparently reflected in the translated text. Hence translation in literature , being transformative and creative, is deeply involved in the construction of culture as Jakobson has used the term "creative transposition" to emphasize its creativity in operative mode (Jakobson,238). Reacting against the literalism and technical accuracy of the 19th century in translation, Chomsky and Nida propounded the theory of science of translation and Nida's *Towards a Science of Translating* was regarded as a Bible of translation on account of its creativity. Nida, taking hints from Chomsky's theory of syntax and generative transformational grammar, provided a 'base-deep-surface model' in which a base component made up of phrase structure rules generates a deep structure which in turn is developed via transformation rules into a surface structure. Both Nida and Chomsky perceived a deep coherent and unified entity behind

whatever manifestation language takes and for this entity they used the term like 'core', 'kernel', 'deep' and 'spirit'. Chomsky realizes its existence in the form of universal rules of grammar and lexical forms in human mind whereas Nida, from metaphysical stand point, takes it as original divine message contained in the deep structure common to all languages. Chomsky assumes that the phrase structure rules represent the internalized and unconscious working of the human mind, deep structure determines meaning underling a sentence and surface structure determines sound. (Chomsky, 22) Chomsky points out to 'innateness', 'intuition' and 'tacit' knowledge in human mind as he thinks that the 'formal universal' common to all languages remains much deeper than the particular deep structure of the sentence in any given language and they are not specific to any particular language. (Chomsky, 117) Pointing out the implication of his thesis for translation, Chomsky writes:

The existence of deep seated formal universals... implies that all languages are cut to the same pattern but does not imply that there is any point by point, correspondence between particular languages. It does not, for example, imply that there must be some reasonable procedure for translating between languages. (Chomsky, 30)

Nida, in *Message and Mission* (1960) as well as in *Towards a Science of Translating* (1965) involved in scientific analysis, is seen "breaking new grounds with new tools" (Nida, 1960: XVII) as he strikes emphatically that "ideas must be modified" to fit with the conceptual map of experience (Nida, 1960: 87). Therefore, in translation Nida tries to solicit the response that God intends as he recommends "making changes in the texts in order to solicit that initial response" (Nida and Taber, 1969: 202). Thus, the roots of Nida's theory sprout from his religious inclination as he takes this message as 'Word of God' and with this notion he takes an ideal translator as an omniscient reader, hence translation in literature with Nida becomes a divine and creative activity of revealing the original message. Edwin Gentzler taking a step ahead comments that "The text, as dense as it may be, and the exegesis, as lucid as it may be, are never complete. There will always be gaps, room for differing interpretation and variable reception. Therein lies the energy of the text" (Gentzler, 57). Nida's theory is grounded in the modern linguistic *non-dit* as he argues that words are essentially labels if they are used to be changed or replaced in order to effect communication, then they should be adjusted accordingly. The concept of defamiliarization sprouting from the Russian Formalism and all the Czech and Slovak group of translation scholars was taken as base for literary translation by the early translation studies. Levy's text *Literary Translation* (1969) is instrumental for translation studies with its emphasis on literariness in translation. He takes translation as full of tension and contradiction because the content in translation is intertextually constructed, represented by two perspectives simultaneously - from the view point of the original signifying system and from that of the second language system. Levy's argument that "The better the translation, the better it overcomes the conflicts and contradictory structures" (Levy, 72) arrives at the same conclusion achieved by

American literary translators that a true or faithful translator favours the “exact recreation of the aesthetic beauty” of the original in the second language (Levy,68). Miko stressing the “expressive categories” (expressive features or qualities) of language (Miko and Popovik: 1978) asserts that translation depends upon the interpretation as well as linguistic and creative ability of the translator. Keeping in view the opinions of the early translation scholars, it is evident that translation in literature is a creative activity in the pursuit of truth. Anton Popovik thinks that losses and gains are a necessary part of the translation process because of the inherent differences of intellectual and aesthetic values in the two cultures. In his essay “The Concept 'Shift of Expression' in Translation Analysis” (1970), he introduces a new term “shift” to characterize the process of translation in literature by which he defines that 'all that appears as new with respect to the original, or fails to appear where it might have been expected, may be interpreted as shift' (Popovik,78). In his opinion shift of expression plays an important role in the translation process as the source text is recreated into target text or receiving culture. James Holmes, an American poet and translator adopting the term 'meta-language' from Roland Barthes uses it for verse translation that becomes a critical commentary on a source text which is taken as if it were a primary text which Holmes designates as 'meta-poem' (Holmes,1988:24). Thus ,with Holmes literary translation especially in poetry becomes a critical exercise of an in-depth nature striving to reveal the truth.

Susan Bassnet in her book *Translation Studies* (1980) breaks down the narrow view of translation as she introduces a new term 'function' and uses it in broader sense showing how liberal application of shift blurs boundaries between traditional definition of translation and adaptation. Her inter-semiotic approach to translation gets force from Levy, Popovik, Lefevere and Broeck. She focuses on the central theme and allows the replacement of the much of the text with all its particular resonance and association, with something new and quite different. Holmes espouses the same opinion about the poetics of translation as he states that translation involves decision making and one decision affects each decision (Holmes,1973-74,79). In this way translation in literature gets a new life through the evolutionary process of languages and cultures what Gentzler calls “ a creative process of cross fertilization” (Gentzler, 108) because ideas tried out by a small group infect others and lead to exponential growth. Including 'high' or 'canonized' form to the 'low' or 'non-canonized' forms in literary systems, Itmar Evan Zohar coined a new system known as poly system with the assumption that involves the social norms and literary conventions in the receiving culture or target system govern the aesthetic presupposition of the translator that influence ensuing translation decision. Therefore, in the Polysystem theory translation seems to transcend 'legitimate' linguistic and literary borders as Zohar and Toury explain in the introduction to *Translation Theory and Intercultural Relations*:

Having once adopted a fundamental (istic) approach, whereby the

object is theory dependent, modern translation theory can not escape transcending 'borders'. Just as the linguistic 'borders' have been transcended, so must the literary ones be transcended. For there are occurrences of a translational nature which call for a semiotics for culture (Evan Zohar and Toury, X).

Defamiliarisation in Formalism became a hallmark of literariness and Tynjanov logically extended its parameters by taking literary and social order within its ambit. Combining the literary and extra literary systems within the society he also developed an approach known as Polysystem theory which has now taken a global recognition covering all the literary systems both major and minor existing in a given culture. This theory allows and integrates the study of literature with the study of social and economic forces of history. Therefore, this theory is a formalism of forms with the assumption that literary systems are composed of multiple differing systems and constantly undergo change, so at the core of this theory lies a concept of a totally integrated and meaningful 'whole'. Gentzler rightly remarks that for Evan Zohar, "culture is the highest organized human structure" (Gentzler, 120) and translations are seen within the larger sociological context in the cultural evolutionary process. Thus translation in literature depends upon the concept of social acceptability in the target culture. The deconstructionist approach in the field of literary translation begins by taking the reverse direction of thought with the hypothesis that the original text is dependent upon translation and without translation the original text ceases to exist, consequently the survival of the original text depends not on its contents or qualities but on those that the translation creates, hence it is the translated text and not the original one that determines the meaning of the text. Looking from this stand point, the original has no fixed identity but changes each time as it passes into translation. Taking a backward leap it also raises a query what exists before the original? Is it an idea or a form or a thing or nothing? Deconstruction takes translation theory to a more philosophical platform from where the entire problematic of translation can be better viewed. Jacques Derrida thinks that deconstruction and translation are inexorably interconnected because in the process of translation the elusive or invisible impossible presence (differance) becomes visible to the highest degree possible. Derrida's theory of deconstruction is founded on the concept of 'non-identity' or non-presence or unrepresentability. In an infinite regressive order, Derrida sees a chain of signification including the original and its translations, in which the translated text becomes a translation of another earlier translation and translated words. Thus in translation theory it is reexamination of something which is never spoken or something unthought. Casting a glance from the anthropological point of view, the existing humans and non-humans are the translated texts of their ancestors. Michel Foucault rightly remarks that "the fact is that every writer creates his own precursors. His work modifies our conception of past as it will modify the future (Foucault, 1977:5). Deconstructionists argue that original texts are constantly being re written in the present and each reading /

translation reconstructs the source text. Foucault in the essay "Man and His Double" in *The order of Things* stresses that 'unthought' is that which escapes as language writes itself. He takes us to a point where language is silent, an illumination of that which is dark and a restoration to language of that which has been mute. In the sense of knowledge and in translation, the 'Other' remains as a blind spot or dark region and Foucault takes the 'Other' as man's double because it accompanies man like a shadow "mutely and uninterruptedly" (Foucault, 1973: 328-29). In the light of this theory it is clear that the meaning of a text is reconsidered when silent elements are returned to the language of a text visible in contradictions, gaps and omissions. Thus deconstructionist theory of translation highlights the great indifference to author and explicit meanings, a listening for unheard, ungraspable- that which is there and yet is not there, lost in the space between the signified and the signifier. Heidegger's logic also gives force to the point when he argues that we don't hear everything, for there is something essential to the nature of language that can not be heard or read. Something is withheld when language speaks. In this way, in his theory we notice the recovery of the silent resonance of the saying. It is this silent non-entity what Foucault calls 'Other' which Heidegger takes as a "simple ungraspable-situation" which becomes "properly worthy of thought" (Heidegger, 88).

Concept of 'Otherness' being an integral part of the poetics of translation is the life and energy of the creative process of literary translation without which translation loses its virtual essence because in the absence of it, translation becomes mechanical and cheap. Translation gets sublime status of its creative expression when the process of 'othering' is activated, consequently its reflection becomes visible in the translated literary text as it gains energy when source/original text is translated into target text /language. The working of the unconscious that gives translated text a new life with its creative power sprouts from the roots of 'otherness'. Taking Heideggerean concept as the argumentative ground, Derrida begins with the exploring of that which is there and yet 'is' not. In his essay "Differance" from *Margins of Philosophy* (1982) he coins neologism 'differance' to refer not what is there but what is not there. The problem according to Derrida, is that the trace (of that particular which is not) can never be presented as a phenomenon. It is always differing and deferring erasing itself in the act of disclosure. It is an unheard thought-- the play of this trace, a notion of motion, can never be presented as Derrida points out that "There is no maintaining, and no depth to this bottomless chess board on which Being is put into play" (Derrida, 1982: 22). Making it more clear Gentzler also writes that in translation "language can be seen as always in the process of modifying the original text, of deferring and displacing forever any possibility of grasping that which the original text desired to name" (Gentzler, 161). Derrida argues that translation becomes life giving force by transforming the source text so that it can live on, so it "lives more and better" and it "lives beyond the means of the author" (Derrida, 1985: 178-9). Passing through the process of birthing and rebirthing literary translation makes language grow simultaneously

ensuring the holy growth of the text, in the light of this translation should not be taken as a carbon copy or reproduction of the original as it explores unheard traces, possibilities that are covered up at the time of speaking. In this way Derrida has subverted source text oriented theories of translation in favour of target text oriented translation, hence his concept of translation is life giving, positive and generative. Jacqueline Risset argumentatively stresses the point that in the translation operation one becomes aware of "something else i. e. language whose field is disturbed, moved in accordance with a forgotten creativity." (Risset, 13) Jonathan Culler in *On Deconstruction* (1983) affirming the fact that in every translation there is substantial loss of meaning takes deconstruction not as "an act of destruction but an act of displacement". (Culler, 150) In this way in literary translation deconstruction challenges those theories that take meaning as a given property of a text which may be called the theories of determinancy. Through the process of translation in literature, postcolonial translators want to subvert the established conceptual system of the images and metaphors based upon Western philosophy and religion with the construction of images and metaphors of non-western culture. Tejaswini Niranjana and Gayatri Spivak, the eminent scholars of the field observe the unequal power relation among different cultures and languages which they think to set right through the creative process of translation in literature. Bengali Tribal story-writer Mahasweta Devi in *Imagery Maps* (1993) traces the borrowing of European idea and values through translation. What is much required in translation in today's multicultural, multiethnic, and multiracial world is a rethinking of translation less in the light of European definitions and values well rooted through popular and convincing western images and metaphors; and more in non-western terms and concepts that are voiceless and unheard on the margin or playing somewhere on the bottomless chessboard as Gerald MacAlester in the essay "A Comment on Translation, Ethics and Education" asserts that "since it is translator's job to correct or gloss the text" and it may be what Kirstein Malmkjaer terms in "Looking Forwards to the Translation" a "transfer mechanism" by which translation is arrived at through "decomposition and recomposition". (Anderman and Rogers, 225, 82)

Eurocentric and Anthropocentric value system of the western culture based on ethical acceptability and divine sanction of the notion of institutionalized killing of 'others' what Derrida calls –'a non criminal putting to death' needs to be replaced through the creative power of literary translation. Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin in *Postcolonial Ecocriticism* (2010) also observe that "Through out western intellectual history civilization has consistently been constructed by or against the wild, the savage and animalistic', hence western civilization is no more than 'a veneer over a still savage European 'inner man' (Huggan and Tiffin, 135) who has become 'spiritually hollow' and 'butcher of the world'. Commenting on the nature of the western humanism they further remark that in the western culture 'it is almost impossible to think of a crime that has not been committed in the name of man.' (Huggan and Tiffin, 208)

therefore, the imperial civilizing mission, authoritarian regimes and western thought system have “abused humanity in humanity's name.” (Huggan and Tiffin, 22) Moreover, unfettered enthusiasm for economic growth is also exploiting human and non-human world in the name of progress. Thus, the challenge before literary translation is to disrupt this kind of value system by dwelling upon the philosophy of pan-humanism which is beyond the western boundaries of humanistic philosophy. The new ways of relationship between humans and non-humans can be imagined and created through the creative power of language, culture and translation. The fair understanding of the text of the universe, nature, different societies, races, religions, cultures as well as the male-female relationship and relationship with non human world require creative translation in literature that can disrupt the stronghold of unethical Eurocentric and Anthropocentric value system. Translation in literature with its evolutionary mode, being transformative and creative with its divine truth pursuing nature, virtually and objectively moving ahead with its mission of translatability revealing the invisible and unvoiced with its holistic perspective, is sure to create a bright future to mankind and the world of knowledge.

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