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Is Poetry Lost in Translation?

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Poetry is notorious for its quality of untranslatability. To Robert Frost, poetry itself is that which is lost in translation. But the works of great translators like Dryden, Pope, Ezra-Pound, Richard Burton, A.L. Basham, Edward Fitzgerald and a host of others have proved that even poetry is often amenable to translation. Yet, there is some truth in what Frost maintained, for some poems by their very nature have an in-built resistance to translation, as in this case for instance.

"A is for apple which lies in the grass,

Bis for beer which froths in the glass,

Cis for curry which we love to eat,

D is for dumplings which are a real "1

It is fairly obvious that such poems cannot be rendered into any other language, since there is a verbal play on the English alphabets. In some other cases, the difficulty may be posed by the strong rhyme and rhythm in the poem. As an example, a traditional rhyme for pre-school children can be quoted.

"One, two, buckle my shoe

Three, four shut the door

Five, six, pick up sticks

Seven, eight, lock the gate

Nine, ten start again."2

The translation of these lines will also be difficult for obvious reasons. But then, there is nothing to be gained by the translation of such poems. A strictly personal or language-based poem allows no translation and often requires no translation. Where there is a transcending element, where poetry tries to heighten our perception of experiences both important and trivial, there is scope for translation. When a poet exhorts the readers,

"To see a World in a Grain of Sand

And Heaven in a wildflower

Hold Infinity in the Palm of your Hand

And Eternity in an Hour."3

his words do reverberate through almost any mind that captures it. Such poems are translatable and should be translated. This is the reason why thousands of readers without Latin and Greek have enjoyed the works of Homer and Virgil. But even the translation of such poems and pieces can create any number of problems for the translator.

To illustrate this, R. Ramachandran's Malayalam poem"Ajantha" and its translation into English by R. Viswanathan can be compared. The original poem marks the occasion of the poet's visit to the Ajantha Caves renowned for its Buddhist sculptures. Thus, it is an encounter between the self-awakened to the potentialities of its imagination and the works of art that the eyes survey. At another level, it lyrically articulates the interrelationship of art and religion, reality and metaphor. Again, the mind seeks transcendence from a life of sensuous engrossment in terms of a vision lent by the Buddhist philosophy and later through art itself, which is again shaped by the spirit of Buddhism. Yet the paradox is there. The end marks the return to the sensuous and tempting image of the dark damsel and to the realization that grief is at the core of all cosmic experience. The original poem and its translation into English are given at the end of this article.

The difference between the original and the English version is very wide-ranging from the length and number of the lines to tone, syntax and even the meaning in a couple of instances. But in translation, close correspondence cannot often be considered as the only criterion for evaluation and differences do not necessarily point to inadequacies or lapses.

Michal Zeller Mayer considers translation as a "metatext or a text about a text.'4 He says: "A translation text is a metatext because the way it chooses to differ from the source text is indicative of the target text's conception of the source text in particular and of textuality in general."5 The same phenomenon had been earlier discussed by Anton Popovic as "shifts of expression" in The Nature of Translation (1970). Traditionally, original texts are believed to have around them a sort of sacred aura and the attempts by foolhardy translators to tamper with them by rendering them into other languages are supposed to be sacrilegious. But, modern translation criticism considers such "shifts" as "meta-messages."6 In that case, the additions, omissions and re-structuring of messages in target text provide information on what it cannot accept and on what it can accept in a different form. Yet, it would be worth the effort to search for the factors which create vast differences between original text and its translation when they are not made deliberately.

The difference between a poem and its translation starts right from the stage of conception. A poet writes about a particular thing or experience because his deep perception of it has strongly moved him to give it a verbal expression. Thus, it is his own emotional, imaginative, or intellectual apprehension of facts and experiences that a poet tries to express. In the case of a translation, the cause for its genesis is the existing poem. This original work stimulates the translator so much that he experiences a deep affinity for the work which in turn prompts him to create a version of that experience in his language. But he is not a person who merely collects the meaning contained in the original poem's linguistic and textual structure or who merely interprets the text's surface signs. Yet, the most frequent criticism against translation is that it lacks the spontaneity and power of the original work as the translator is trying to render the original poet's views faithfully. It is true, that no man can think another man's thoughts or feel another man's feelings exactly and in totality, but this is not what is expected of a translator either. The basic qualification that a good translator should meet is that he should be able to peruse a literary work in such a way that he can make a sensible reading of it. There are readers who point out inaccuracies as did the mathematician Babbage when Tennyson published his poem "The Vision of Sin". This incident was mentioned by. Hankin in his book Sense and Its Cultivation is very interesting. In the poem, Tennyson writes

"Every moment dies a man,

Every moment one is born"

The mathematician could not digest this and so he wrote to Tennyson that if this were true, the population of the world would be at a standstill. Since, the rate of birth is slightly higher than the death rate, he suggested a modification:

"Every moment dies a man

Every moment 1 1/16 is born".

Not content even with this modification he added a note. "The actual figure is a decimal that is so long that I cannot get it in the line, but I believe 1 1/16 will be sufficiently accurate for poetry—".Literary translation becomes atrocious when it is done by precision maniacs devoid of imagination. But when it is undertaken by a person whose interpretation of the poem clothes it in the beauty and freshness of creativity once again, it can stand as a fairly good substitute for the original. It was Eliot who spoke of the twenty-five centuries of culture living in the very marrow of the poet whose individual talent should be conscious also of tradition. Myriam Diaz-Diocaretz too speaks of a composite known as "the poet's personality"7 which "consists not simply of the individual who creates a given number of texts but rather a sort of 'common denominator' the "sum of all the poet's writings."8 The criteria which are essential for a poet should be possessed by the translator of poetry as well.

There is no point in evaluating a translation as second best simply because it is a translation. If we think on that line, we will have to admit that every art whether it is painting, sculpture or literature, is somewhere only a translation— "a translation of the original that was composed in the immanent space in the heart'9 of its creator. Perfection cannot be there in the poetry that we read, it is there only in the poet's vision. Actual poetry is that which is waiting to be born. Poetry loses much of its charm when the poet externalizes or translates into words the inner melody and the uniqueness of his vision. What is a fire in his imagination turns rather to ashes in words, though the spark may still be there. Thus, at one level even an original work of art is only a translation. K. Chellappan in his article. "The Paradox of Transcreation," says that every creation is a paradox—the paradox of "a deep inner language made outer, the recalcitrant interiority and uniqueness of vision made a universal possession and this fundamental paradox of creation is intensified in translation because here the translator has to externalize someone else's vision in some other medium into his medium…."10 Yet, this double difficulty can be overcome by dexteroustranslators creatively.

Now, there cannot be any doubt that the genesis of a poem is quite different from that of a translation. But, when we compare the original poem "Ajantha" and its translation (as is the case with any poem and its translation) the most striking difference is the change in the shape, the appearance and the aesthetics of the visual form of letters and the emotional experience associated with them. This is something which cannot be helped because during translation SLgraphology and consequently, SL phonology are inevitably replaced by TL graphology and TL phonology respectively. But even the number of lines are drastically reduced in the translation. While the original poem has seventy-three lines, the translation has just fifty-one lines. Thus, a change has occurred in the length and form of writing and this certainly changes the first visual impact that the poem makes upon the reader. Coming to the overall structure, the original poem has four stanzas of five, nine, thirty-three and twenty-five lines respectively. But the translated version of the poem has stanzas of three, four, five and eight lines besides couplets. Samuel johnson in his Dictionary has mentioned that "Stanza is originally a room of a house and came to signify a subdivision of a poem."11 If so, it can be said that the grand mansion of the original poem with large spacious rooms is re-structured into another graceful dwelling with more rooms of smaller sizes. Yet this cannot be considered as too unnecessary a meddling done by the translator. In the source language, i.e., Malayalam, it is quite possible to have very long stanzas in poems. But it will strike as odd in the TL. Edward Bysshe in his The Art of English Poetry (1702) says: "The stanzas employed in our poetry cannot consist of less than three and seldom of more than 12 verses, except in Pindaric Odes."12. The translator's ingenuity in re-structuring the original poem has thus served only to make it more at home in the TL. Thus, even objective factors of typological nature can be affected by factors of a subjective nature. In the translation of the same poem—i.e., 'Ajantha' done by T.R.K. Marar the stanza form is kept just as in the original. So, even the adherence to form is subjective. It is an indication of the translator's response to the potential features of the work as well as his knowledge of the practices in the recipient literature at a specific historical moment.

Modern literary criticism holds the view that during the process of translation, it is not the meaning that is translated. This is so because "the meaning of a poem does not reside in the poem alone, but in its relation to other poems, other forms of language and to the whole semiotic code in which the author lives. Its meaning is largely a matter of the way it confirms, nuances or subverts that code. If it merely repeats the code, it is an empty cliche; if it bears no recognizable relation to it, it is nonsense; if it does something in between, it becomes meaningful."13 But if a translator is not translating the meaning of a text, then what does he translate? He is translating only the meaningful elements of the text- the graphic, lexical, syntactic, rhetorical and formal features which constitute what the text is

and what it suggests. Thus, the form also is important, especially in certain poems where the poets make conscious use of specific forms for definite purposes. To illustrate this a concrete poem by lanHamilton Finlay is given below.

SAIL

S-_A_I_L

S_ A_ I_ L

S A I L O R14

Here, the poem has a triangular pattern, like that of a triangular sail. One can have the visual illusion of a little boat with atriangular sail coming nearer and nearer to the land, till at last one sees the sailor also standing beside the sail. In the translation of such poems, it is good to retain the shape and form of the original.

Form becomes an extension of content not only in poems which make use of few words, but this can occur in longer poems as well. As an example, E.E. Cummings's "Among Crumbling People" can be cited.

"a

mong crumbling people (a

long ruined streets

hither and) softly

thither between (tum

bling)

houses (as

the knot

wing spirit prowls, its15

Here, the whole poem gives the appearance of a crumbling structure. In poems like these, the form has to be kept at any cost as the form is also the content.

Even in ordinary poems, the length and arrangement of lines are important. Alan Maley and Alan Duff have pointed out in their book The Inward Ear that "a poem becomes a poem by being called a poem and by being set out typographically in a certain way."16 This is illustrated with an example. The words given below form a poem.

"I no longer know

who

or what

I am.

Or perhaps

I know it

only too well.

The pain swells

to a crescendo.

Pain that has nothing to do

With the severed breast."

The very same words read like prose when written as below.

"I no longer know who or what I am. Or perhaps

I know it only too well.

The pain swells to a crescendo. Pain that has

nothing to do with the severed breast."

This shows how important the form of a poem or the spatial arrangement of words in a poem is and hence proper attention must be given to these factors. As far as possible, the translator of a poem should try to retain the form. As matter and manner are inextricably bound in poetry, the meaning of a poem is not just content bound, but it is also sign-bound and hence individual words as well as their arrangement accumulate meaning. But if the translator feels that the retention of a particular form will not create the desired effect in the target-text reader then he can take liberties with the form as he thinks fit.

Thirdly, when a poem is translated, the sound of the poem and the internal and external perceptions of its acoustic beauty and the emotions attached to them are changed. The sound effect a poem produces is very important and that is why poetry makes use of such techniques as rhythm, rhyme, metre, alliteration, assonance, repetition, refrain, etc. Though no known language is without poetry and though the conventions governing the language of poetry are likewise familiar to the speakers of all the languages, it is quite difficult to reproduce any of these peculiarities into another language. In the original poem "Ajantha" though there is noregular metree, devices like rhyme, alliteration, repetition, assonance, etc. are frequently used. There is also a regular rhythm which fully matches with the theme. Yet, none of these measures are reproduced in the translation as such, as it is impossible to do so. In Malayalam and also in English, there are several rhymes. Yet, it is not easy to reproduce the SL rhymes exactly in the TL, retaining the meaning of the words. In many instances, the rhythm also is lost in the translation while the meaning is steadfastly adhered to. This affects the beauty and impact of the poem as poets make conscious use of rhythm. In the translation of a poem, the translator should try to retain the meaning as well as the rhythm and melody. This is applicable in the case of metres also. Normally English metre is stress-timed while in Malayalam it is syllable-timed. Hence, it is impossible to reproduce a particular Malayalam metre into English and vice- versa. Thus it is clear that producing an 'adequate translation' of any poem into another language is rather difficult. The concept of adequate translation was propounded by Gideon Touring in 1980. According to him, AT or "Adequate Translation is not an actual text, but a hypothetical reconstruction of the textual relations and functions of the source text (ST). Since it comprises only such features, on various levels of description, as are functionally relevant for the structural relationships with the source text and thestructure of the text as a whole, Adequate

Translation can be regarded as the optimum (or maximum) reconstruction of all ST elements possessing textual functions."17 Such elements are called"extremes"18 after Even-Zohar. Thus, an AT, includes phonic, lexical and syntactic components, language varieties, figures of rhetoric, narrative and poetic structures, elements of text convention, stylistic aspects, thematic elements etc. This is the reason why it is difficult to create an AT for any poem. And, even if one succeeds in producing an AT of a poem, it may not create the desired effect in the target audience as language is a "polysystem"19. In the source language system, phenomena such as alliteration, rhyme, metre etc. may have a particular value position. As language systems differ from one another very widely, it cannot be said that if poetic features are reproduced superficially in an identical manner in two languages, their value positions will be similar. In a vast majority of cases it may become a different phenomenon.

As for the elements which create the musical effects in a poem, only the method of substitution can be adopted, i.e., the translator should try to make up for the loss of SL metre and music with what is available in the TL. This is what is done by the translator of "Ajantha", and this is the only method that can be adopted by all translators of poetry if they are to produce almost the same effect as that of the SL readers in the TL readers. HenryGifford in his "Notes on Translation" refers to the superstitious dread felt by verse translators in altering the metrical form. According to him, every poem enacts a unique experience along a particular curve of impression and feeling in such a way that one detail precedes another. This dictates the essential rhythm expressed in a certain metrical pattern. The same pattern in a different language may frustrate the intention of the poet. Hence, the duty of a translator must be to trace the necessary internal movement in a poem, and not to part with it when he recreates the work in the TL.

Fourthly, words with their bases, prefixes, suffixes, stress, patterns of sense and their connotations are changed in translation. In his search for the equivalent of a word, the translator meets with many difficulties. According to J.C. Catford, there are two types of translation equivalence-textual equivalence and formal correspondence. A textual translation equivalent is "any TL form (text or portion of text)which is observed to be the equivalent of a given form (text or portion of text)20 and a formal correspondent is "anyTL category (unit, class, structure, element of structure, etc.) which can be said to occupy, as nearly as possible, the 'same' place in the economy of the TL as the given SL category in the SL"21. English and any Indian language can operate successfully only at the semantic level. However, semantic units are not independent of the contexts in which they are used and the qualities of form are inseparable from the meaning of the word in most of the

theliterary texts. Hence, meaning is dependent both on the contextual and formal relations of the words. To illustrate this argument several instances can be cited. (a) Some words have great suggestiveness in certain contexts and this phenomenon is something which defies translation totally. For example, consider the word "syamasundari" (line 55) in the original poem "Ajantha". The word 'syama'in Malayalam means "dark". But the word is so often associated with Lord Krishna that it evokes all the sensuousness and the mythical aura that go with the image of Krishna. Moreover, the poet had published a collection of poems under the title "Syamasundari "and "Ajantha" is the last poem in this collection. When the same word is used by the poet in the poem, it evokes certainassociations whichh are difficult to be conveyed to the TL readers. Moreover, it also suggests the poet's deep enchantment with the sculpture. (b)Some images are unlikely to have their equivalents in other languages as their perception may be outside the circle of the immediate experience of the speakers of that particular language. In line 65of "Ajantha" there is mention of "vennilavoli" which refers to the beautiful, white, serene, twilight. Such tropical attributes of the moon, its coolness etc. in Malayalam and the other Indian languages are impossible to have their exact equivalents in the temperate zones of the English-speaking countries. Though the choice of the word "moonlight" is correct as a semantic equivalent, it does not have any of the connotations of "vennilavoli". (c) Thirdly, losses in translation occur when the original words contain something more than their plain meanings. This 'somethingmore' may be found in onomatopoeia, i.e., the harmony between sense and sound, in some subtle alliteration or other such little literary devices. For example, 'calanarahitamamcalanam' produces an effect which is not there in"static mobility". In the original, the word suggesting motion(calanam) is repeated twice but the expression as a whole refers to the negation of motion. Again, "claim" by its very sound suggests movement. These effects are lost in the translation as "static mobility" is just two contradictory terms joined together. (d)Fourthly, trouble arises for the translators when a word in the source language has more than one meaning and when both these meanings together add different dimensions to the poem. For example, in line 22 of the original, there is the word' nityata' which means both 'eternity' and 'God'. The second meaning, i.e., the suggestion regarding God, would not strongly present itself to the mind of the target-text reader while this will very much influence a source-textreader's interpretation of the poem, for R. Ramachandran has another poem "Under the Shadow of Divine Sorrow" in Malayalam in which he associates God with eternity and loneliness. During translation, it is difficult or rather impossible to find TL equivalents which have all the meanings, or which carry all the implications of a SLword. In the translation of such words, therefore, losses inevitably occur. But as Theodore Savory says, in almost all poetry there is"the vision that prompts the poet's thoughts and which he tries to show us and to share with us.

The poet has seen or heard or otherwise experienced something that we might never have known but for his poetry."22 If the translator can recapture and communicate this experience by faithful and simple translation, then he has succeeded.

In the translation of literary works, it is not enough if these semantic meanings of words are presented faithfully because a crucial problem of creative translation is not the non-availability of equivalent lexical terms or semantic structures in the target language. These problems are quite general and nothing can be done about them except overcoming them by recourse to approximation.

For example, for many lexical terms in Indian languages, it is impossible to find exact equivalents in English. Further, even when an equivalent is found, the connotations of the two may be different. For example, in the original poem 'Ajantha" there are the lines

"Nindelilayilnicirikyumbo-

lenumvelicamparakkunnu."

Here "Lila" is much more than "play" which is the target – text equivalent.

Sometimes translations acquire dimensions which are not intended by the original poet. For example, lines 32-39 in the translation of "Ajantha" describing the lascivious damsel leaning on "a gold-enamelled pillar transports the reader to the indestructible world of Keats's Grecian urn. The "ever-virgin" of 'Ajantha' can very well be compared with Keats's 'Beauty' who for ever will "be fair". The permanence of the sculptured figure in the Ajantha Cave and art in general is emphasized by the distant echo of Keats'sstrong assertion of the same fact in his poem, "Ode on a Grecian Urn". Thus, not only losses but gains also can occur in translations. This is why Myriam Diaz- Diocaretz has remarked that the translator produces not a "derivative text",24 but "an equivalent text which will produce other readings in the RT".25

Next, the relationship between words, the arrangement of words in sentences etc. are changed in translation. The words in a work along with their arrangement, determines its style. The translatorbefore doing the work of translation must determine the originalauthor's style and then shape his style accordingly. Eventhough thetranslator correctly grasps the style or tone of a work, it may not bealways possible for him to reproduce it precisely. English is a language which ordinarily places its subject at the

beginning of sentences. The word order of sentences is normally subject, verb,object. In languages like Malayalam, if necessary, the subject canbe placed anywhere in the sentence depending on the stress or emphasis given to the word. For example, the first reference in theoriginal poem "Ajantha" is to "sunyata" (emptiness or nothingness).

This image of the eternal void echoes the tone of the entire poem.On the superficial level, it suggests the deep emptiness, the cooldarkness and the impregnant silence that exist within the cave. Butthis effect is reduced in the translation as the "void" is mentionedonly as the last word in the first stanza. In some cases this change inword order can become an insurmountable impediment, whereasnormally it causes only a shift in emphasis as is the case with theexample given above. In his article "Translation as LiteratureThree,"26 K.V. Thirumalesh brings out the difficulties posed by thedifferences in syntax between the SL and the TL by referring to astory in Greek Myths by Robert Graves. Narcissus is so handsomethat whosoever looks at him falls in love with him at first sight. Buthe rejects all offers of love. Echo is one of the several women inlove with him. She secretly follows him, wherever he goes. Onaparticular day, Narcissus gets separated from his companions in theforest. Realizing that he has lost his way, he calls "Is anyone here?"

Echo is only too glad to respond to him. But unfortunately, she wasunder a terrible curse from Hera. Echo can only repeat what otherssay. So she repeats "here". Then Narcissus calls "come" and sherushes out to meet him. But he rudely shakes her off and says:" I will die before you ever lie with me." Seizing this wonderfulopportunity to make her point, she repeats the last part of the sentenceand pleads, "Lie with me." As Thirumalesh points out, this conversation is impossible to be translated into many of the Indian languages including Malayalam. This is because in these Indian languages the subordinate clauses can occur only on the left of themain clause. To overcome this kind of serious difficulties, the translator must have real ingenuity.

The translation of metaphors, proverbs, idioms and phrasesalso pose problems to translators. Many Indian idioms and proverbs do not have equivalents in the English language. Hence, whatis usually done is substituting the TL idioms and proverbs havingmore or less the same meaning for the SL ones. This can happen inthe case of adjectives as well. For example, in line 62 of theoriginal poem "Ajantha", there is the phrase "Aksayanandam". Theword "aksaya" brings to the mind of an average SL reader wordslike "'aksayapatram" (Draupadi's vessel which by a boon of LordKrishna could satisfy the hunger of a number of people and stillremained full) and hence evokes a feeling of something ethereal andheavenly. But as the RL equivalent of this word which is

"eternal"cannot raise any such associations, the translator has deliberatelychanged the adjective to "amaranthine". Amaranth is a mythicalheavenly flower of unfading beauty and fragrance. Thus, throughthe adoption of this image, the translator tries to acquire at leastpartially, the heavenly grace and glory suggested in the original.

Gideon Toury in his article "A Rationale for DescriptiveTranslation Studies"27 mentions six ways of treating a metaphor.There are four source-oriented methods such as (1) metaphor intosame metaphor (2) metaphor into different metaphor (3) metaphorinto non-metaphor (4) metaphor into 0(i.e. complete omission) andtwo target-oriented approaches such as (1) non-metaphor into metaphor, and (2) 0 into metaphor. The last two mentioned ways can actas "compensation mechanisms"28 by which the translator can enhance the beauty and impact of a translated work obeying the rulesof the target system. The translator of 'Ajantha' has, in the instancecited above, added considerably to the beauty of the translationthrough his ingenuity.

Finally, the meaning of the text and the culture that goes withit are changed in translation. The customs and conventions in onepart of the world are widely different from those in another. Besides, a language is undoubtedly the reflection of a particular culture. Thus, the element of culture is often a major impediment intranslations. In his book Culture, Language,Text, Fredrik Chr.Brogger illustrates the interrelation of culture, language and literature as in the following figure.29

This graphic illustration reveals that language, literature and cultureare interdependent. Kathy Mezei has asserted that there is more tothe translation process than the hermeneutic encoding and decodingSteiner speaks of; we must consider the factors as well which influence the production of meaning in the source and target texts; wemust consider the function of both the source and the target texts.

That is, the translator must consider three referentialsystems— the particular system of the text, the system of the cultureout of which the text has sprung and the cultural system in whichthe meta-text will be created.30

In this sense, translation is intersubjective communication aswell as inter-semiotic mediation. Culture creates problems for translators because a particular language will have words only for whatis experienced by the speakers of that language and not for anythingelse. For a culture specific word in the SL, there may not be acorresponding word

in the TL. On the other hand, there are instances of language affecting and moulding thoughts and culture.As Alan Duff pointed out in his The Third Language (10), it isnatural for the English speakers to see the limbs as being dividedinto legs and feet, arms and hands while by the Yugoslavs thesedivisions are not perceived as they do not exist in that language.'Noga' stands for leg and/or foot, 'ruka' for arm and/or hand.

Cultural interferences are minimal in the case of languageswhich happen to be in prolonged contact with each other. Theselanguages will develop over a period of time, a large number ofcommon words and translation equivalents that facilitate the smoothtransfer of meaning from one language into another. This is the casewith Malayalam and English. For example, certain mystical andphilosophical concepts in the Indian languages do not have corresponding terms of comparable depth in the English language. Manysuch words of Indian origin have found a place in the Englishlanguage and they make the translation of such concepts rathereasy. In the translation of the poem "Ajantha", in line 10, the word'karma' is used as such, though it is not an English word. At thesame time, the word is supposed to be intelligible to an averageEnglish reader.

Eugene A. Nida in his article "Implications of ContemporaryLinguistics for Biblical Scholarship" has advised "lengthening ofthe text …. (and) supplementation of the text by certain marginalhelps which will provide the necessary background information indispensable to a proper understanding of the text'31in the translation of culture specific passages. This becomes an unavoidable necessity in the case of words which are bodily lifted from the original. In the last line of the translation of "Ajantha'', there is theword 'tathagatha', which is another name for Buddha or a Buddhistsaint in the SL. This word is retained as such in the translation. Foran average TL reader, the word may need clarification. Again, theconnection between the Ajantha caves and the image of Buddhamay be clear to most of the SL readers while it is better to providethis background information to the TL readers. This is so becausethe image of the Buddha is the central image around which the cosmosof the whole poem revolves, though his name occurs only in the lastline of the poem.

Translation, no doubt, can do much to create contacts between cultures. Casagrande has gone to the extent of stating that, "Ineffect, one does not translate languages, one translatesCULTURES."32 Several strategies are employed in the translationof unmatched elements of culture in differentlanguages.Borrowing, definition, literal translation, substitution, lexicalcreation, omission and addition are some of the common procedures. Building in redundancy is also widely used by translators. Inthe original poem "Ajantha"

there is the usage “janmantara-sauhrdasmaranakal”. This single compound word is rendered intwo lines in the translation.

“The memories of intimate ties

In lives other than this”

This is an instance to show how the translator can reduce considerably the effort the TL reader has to make by stretching and thereby diluting the message. During this process, an information is raisedfrom the level of an implicit to an explicit one. According to Nida.any message has two dimensions, namely length and difficulty. Whenan author writes, he will design his message in such a way that itpasses through the channel capacity of the receptors. But when atranslator tries to render the same message literally from the sourceto the receptor language retaining the length as such, then the dimensions of difficulty may become very high in certain cases. Translators do make use of redundancy or lengthening at times, so thatthe translated message poses only the same amount of difficulty tothe TL receptors as was posed by the original message to the SLreceptors. While explaining redundancy Nida and Taber quotes theremark of an African who said that

This is just what a python does when he kills an animal hecannot swallow: he coils his body around the animal, crushesit and thus squeezes it out long and thin so that he can swallow it. The meat and the bones are all there. They are just in adifferent form.33

The translator uses this method to make swallowable theunswallowable portions of the text.As the author and the translator belong to two different language-culture communities, a “cultural-filter”34 will have to be inserted bythe translator at times. The application of the cultural-filter maynecessitate a re-programming of certain textual elements or theircomplete omission. In line 36, of the original poem, there is thedescription of the distant sounds of the cosmos heard within thecave very feebly like the painful writhing of a dying dove hit by adart. The image of the dove when used in connection with LordBuddha will necessarily remind an average SL reader of the well-known incident in the boyhood days of Lord Buddha35. But the significance of this story is likely to be lost on a TL reader. Hence,the translator has filtered out the image of the dove and hasreplaced it with a more general term “bird”. What is not crucialto a text can be omitted if the translator feels like it.

On the whole, it can be said that the translation of 'Ajantha' isdone efficiently and using Catford's terminology it can be describedas a "total translation"36 in which SL grammar and lexis are replaced by equivalent TL grammar and lexis with consequential re-placement of SL phonology and graphology by (non-equivalent) TLphonology and graphology. An exception to this rule is the lastword in the last line of the translation where the "TATHAGATHA" is transliterated and bodily transferred. Thismethod is usually adopted when the translator feels that the entireconnotation of an original SL lexical item is impossible to be evoked by any equivalent term in the TL. This aspect of the translationmakes one feel that the translator fulfils the criterion that a goodtranslator should be an ideal reader besides being an acting writer.He has grasped the full significance of the specific linguistic code(here, the word "Tathagatha') in the SL cultural system and to projecthis interpretation of the lines in which the image of Buddha loomslarge, the word is written in capital letters in the translation. This isa strategy adopted by the translator to make the prospective readersaware of the centrality of the image of Buddha. Decisions aboutsuch strategies and selections begin in the course of the translator'sreading phase and are realized during the writing-phase. During thisphase motivated by his own cultural and ideological presuppositions and his specific interests and objectives, the translator givesthe readers hints or points from which to interpret a work. This ispermissible because now it is generally agreed that the translatorcan even "change the meaning of texts"37 It is argued that, "thefunction of the translator is traceable as strategy: the reader's response may be modified or directed to areas of discourse that havenot been designed by the author, thus altering completely the meaning intended in the text'.38 Here, the translator does not adopt thisextremist view-point but has rather adopted a middle-of-the roadapproach, which was advocated by Joost Van den Vondelwhotranslated into Dutch Grotius's play Sofompaneas (1635). It is however interesting to note that the image of "Tathagatha" or Buddha does not figure at all in the translation of the same poem intEnglish done by T.R.K. Marar. The last stanza of that translationreads like this:

"The undying happiness of my soul lies

Merged with the lovely lotus in your hand.

Could they be sad, my dear,

Those memories of love in lives gone by

That the cool breeze awakens in my heart

On misty nights under a faint moon

I know not;Nor in my eyes does gleam

The melting sympathy

And the smile it generates."

This serves as a very good instance to prove the essential truth ofcontemporary reader-response criticism which fully recognizes thereader's active participation in the meaning process and holds theview that "a text is not a linear monologue of an absent author readby a passive audience."40 Hence, while the first translator on reading the last stanza of the original poem felt that the lines gavecapital importance to the image of Buddha, the second translator didnot even suspect the presence of the image in the very same lines.That is why it is said that a translated work always remains theproduct of the combined perceptions of both the poet and the translator. A translator as long as he has some consideration for thework he is undertaking, will be speaking for himself as well as forthe writer he is translating. Thus, he will be at the same timewithdrawing into his own subjectivity as well as moving out toidentify himself with his author.

All literary translators face almost the same problems and hencethese problems may arise in the translation of prose as well. Any-how, the listing of the problems which may arise in the translationof poetry makes one feel that poetry is not totally untranslatable as it is commonly supposed, though the act of translating a poem requires the genius as well as the artistic talent of a poet in the translator. There may be differences between a poem and its translation,but that need not necessarily be detrimental to the poetic effectpossessed by the work. There can occur not only losses but alsogains in translation. Besides, no language is likely to lose anythingby receiving the translation of any work from another language. Itwill only be a bit richer for it. And, as for Robert Frost's toofabricated statement on poetry and translation it is time we altered it- 'Poetry is not what is lost in translation, it is what can be recreatedin translation.'

NOTES

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24. Diaz-Diocaretz, Translating Poetic Discourse 33.

25. Diaz-Diocaretz, Translating Poetic Discourse 33.

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28. Gideon Toury, The Manipulation of Literature 2.

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32. J.B. Casagrande, "The Ends of Translation," International Journal of American Linguistics 20.4 (1954): 338,

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35. Young Siddharta once rescued a dove from the cruel darts ofhis playmate Devadatta. They were taken to the king whenthere arose a quarrel between the two for the ownership of thebird. The king decided in favour of Siddharta as the boy arguedthat ownership could be claimed only by a person who tries to protect a being and not by one who is out to kill it. The story isstill remembered as a testimony to the kindness and benevolence that Lord Buddha exhibited even from the days of his childhood.

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