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Translation: Towards Converging the Divergence

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India being a country known for multilingual and multi-ethnic identities can hardly afford to ignore the essential diversity characterising the lives, cultures and belief systems of its citizens. The very notion of 'nation' remains hazy unless it is understood in terms of realisation of composite realities guiding the people across the boundaries— regional, religious, communal, linguistic or cultural. The nation having a complex past of rulers coming from different lands with nearly 500 languages (22 scheduled), and thousands of dialects cannot be appreciated without relying upon translation as a process to converge the essential divergences. Since the ancient times, Indian culture and literature has got shaped and reshaped by the active translation of Indian texts into different languages. If Bhagavad Gita was rendered in Marathi by Jnanadev in 1291, Upanishads were got translated by Dara Shikoh, son of Shah Jahan in 1657. Similarly, the tradition of translation could immortalise the texts like Mahabharata, Ramayana, Shakuntala, Vedic texts, and scores of others. Translation has always been embedded in Indian culture as upto the nineteenth century our literature largely depended on translations, adaptations, interpretations and retellings. K Satchidanandan observes that translations of literary works as well as knowledge-texts: discourses on medicine, astronomy, metallurgy, travel, ship-building, architecture, philosophy, religion and poetics from Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit, Persian and Arabic had kept our cultural scene vibrant and enriched our awareness of the world for long. According to him, "Ideas and concepts like 'Indian literature', 'Indian culture', 'Indian philosophy' and 'Indian knowledge systems' would have been impossible in the absence of translations with their

natural integrationist mission” (Satchidanandan).¹ Perhaps, it is the rich tradition of translation only which motivated A.K. Ramanujan to write a controversial essay like “Three Hundred Ramayanas: Five Examples and Three Thoughts on Translation”. It is so because, according to Walter Benjamin “... the kinship of languages is brought out by a translation far more profoundly and clearly than in the superficial and indefinable similarity of two works of literature... it is translation which catches fire on the eternal life of the works and the perpetual renewal of language” (Benjamin, 17-18). It is in this background that literature in translation holds relevance in a country like ours where at every couple of miles, dialects happen to vary.

In Indian context, translation is not merely an activity relegated as ‘duplication’, ‘reproduction’ or ‘imitation of imitation’; rather, it is even more creative and rewarding than the initial act of creation by the author (especially an author writing in regional languages). For Benjamin, translator is supposed to release in his own language that pure language which is under the spell of the original author and to liberate the language imprisoned in a work in his re-creation of that work. He idolises the process of translation as “... it does not cover the original, does not black its light, but allows the pure language, as though reinforced by its own medium to shine upon the original all the more fully.” (Benjamin, 21)

The huge amount of funds being allocated to the institutes like Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL); Central Hindi Directorate; Kendriya Hindi Shikshan Mandal; National Council for Promotion of Urdu Language; National Council for Promotion of Sindhi Language; Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan; Commission for Scientific and Technical Terminology; and English and Foreign Languages University (EFLU) Hyderabad and the programmes like National Translation Mission, Book Promotional Activities and the courses and projects undertaken by them are certainly in tune with the vision of keeping the composite identity of India and Indians intact. National Translation Mission being a brain-child of the National Knowledge Commission intends to translate textbooks and classical works in areas like sociology, history, geography, geology, medicine, chemistry, physics, mathematics, linguistics and political science into the Indian languages in order to raise the standard of education done in mother tongues and to

¹ K. Satchidanandan, “Translation its Role and Scope in India,”
<<http://www.digitalllearning.in/articles/article-details.asp?articleid=2746&typ=COLUMNS>>.

render accessible current and cutting-edge knowledge so far available only in English to the rural poor and the backward sections of the society.² Besides, the Centre for Applied Linguistics and Translation Studies (CALTS) which was created as a research centre at University of Hyderabad in 1988 runs training programmes in translation. Similarly, a centre for literary translation was setup in New Delhi with an academic campus at Goa in 1993. Committing itself to the cause of unifying the people across linguistic boundaries, Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) introduced the School of Translation Studies and Training in 2007. The priority areas of this school are: translation theory, history of translation, translation: sociology and culture, translation of literary and non-literary texts, translation between genre, translation in media, machine translation and lexicography/ terminology and corpus development. All these initiatives are in tune with the fact that it is only through cultural exchange and literature in translation that the Indians happen to appreciate the existing diversity marking the lives of the people belonging to different cultural and literary spaces. Realising the importance of translation, Government of India has recently launched a new mission, Indian Literature Abroad (ILA). Similarly, the growing demand of literature in translation has compelled the publishing houses like Penguin, Macmillan, Orient Blackswan, Seagull, Oxford University Press, Harper-Collins, Hatchett etc. to promote the publication of translations of literary and philosophical treatises in a big way.

To locate the popularity of translation in Indian context, with the coinage of the term 'cultural turn' the link between translation studies and cultural studies became stronger as it implies that "neither the word, nor the text, but the culture becomes the operational unit of translation" (Lefevere, 8). Therefore, Translation theory is being gradually recognized as a significant area of study in regional languages and greater numbers of writings on translation are appearing in these languages. It should explore the relationships between the multiplicities of Indian languages. Such relationships are historical, political, social and literary. It should also focus on the issues like the challenges of translating from regional language to another. The project Aadan Pradan (lit. interexchange) run by National Book Trust, and Sahitya Akademi projects for translating a major literary work from one language

² K. Satchidanandan, "Translation its Role and Scope in India,"
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into another are the significant contributors in popularising the concept of unifying the nation through translation. He points out that these projects aim at 'forging national integration through the exchange of creative literature'.

While opting to translate the Indian texts, Dilip Chitre felt compelled "to build a bridge within myself between India or Europe or else I become a fragmented person (2003:311-312)." Similarly, AK Ramanujan, who holds a unique place as a poet, translator, and a theorist, had announced the great ambition to translate non-native reader into a native one as one of the main motivation behind translation. For the authors holding translation relevant, the issue of identity and Indianness emerge as the most prominent in their works. Today, the Indian theorists and scholars like Harish Trivedi, G.N.Devy, Dilip Chitre, Tejaswini Niranjana, and Sujit Mukherjee are chiefly concerned about what is called Indian Literature in English Translation, or Indo-English Literature. St. Pierre establishes the connection between translation and cultural unity of the nation when he remarks that "Translation... underscores the connection of translation to power: relations between languages and between communities are actualized and transformed through translation; translation strategies reproduce more than mere meaning. (Pierre, 145)

Translation has proved itself crucial for the emerging literatures from the margins i.e. the Dalit literature, tribal literature, marginal literature, aboriginal literature and many more, in giving them recognition at national and international level. Itamar Even-Zohar observes that translation invigorates the new literatures. "In the first case translated literature simply fulfills the need of a younger literature to put into use its newly founded (or renovated) tongue for as many literary types as possible in order to make it serviceable as a literary language and useful for its emerging public" (Zohar, 194). Zohar's statement gets justified in Indian context because the regional literatures written by the marginal authors could invite the attention of the readers across the board only after these were available in translation in the dominant languages—English or Hindi. Mahasweta Devi and her stories written in Bangla could impress the readers throughout the country for the truthful representation of tribals as subalterns only with the translation of her works by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Rabindranath Tagore must have failed to invite the attention of readers across the country if his works like *Gitanjali*, *Home and Abroad* and many others were not translated into English either by himself or other translators. In such cases, translation cannot be held as a secondary activity; rather it

immortalises the great works of literature to the extent that they don't get restricted to narrow boundaries of a particular culture, society, region, religion, language or the country. It proves more crucial in terms of protecting minority culture and language as "... minority language cultures are of course translation cultures par excellence as they are heavily dependent on translation (for their survival) Translation is a central and inescapable fact of the economic, scientific and cultural life of a minority language" (Cronin, 170). However, the elevation of translation to the level of preserver, saviour or revitaliser of literary works in regional languages may be questioned by the theorists who find cultural translation as objectionable for the fact that human communities cannot be considered as homogeneous, monolithic or essentially static. Besides, there are the host of others who condemn translation for the charges of cannibalisation against translation. Moreover, the postcolonial approach to translation from and into dominated/dominating cultures is considered as biased because more often than not translation from dominated cultures not only informs and empowers the colonisers but also serves to interpellate (the process by which ideology addresses the pre-ideological individual and produces him or her as a subject proper) the colonised into colonial subjects. E.E. Evans-Pritchard, a crucial figure in the development of social anthropology in the English speaking world coined the term 'translation of culture' to make the experience of other peoples understandable to us, understandable without domesticating that experience or making into something other than it really is for the people who live it (Qtd. by Morris, 88). At the same time, there are the theorists who consider translation as a potent medium of resistance, decolonisation and democratic geopolitical relations by understanding other cultures on equal terms.

In the age of globalisation and subsequent mobility across the nations when lesser known languages are threatened, translation becomes all the more important. In terms of literature in the age of globalisation, travel-writings have become quite popular today and the interconnections between local and global make the translation far more important than ever. The emerging Diaspora writings and their protagonists are marked with displacement, hybridisation, mimicry and ambivalence and according to Rushdie these 'translated men' are bound to lose and gain proportionately while narrating their experiences. The travel writings generally involve an outsider's perception of a nation and so the languages of the author and the landscape portrayed by him, are different. The

concept of 'world literature' further promotes translation as the process to maintain proximity among literatures written across the world.

With the rise of electronic media and mushrooming of news channels and the competition within them, translation has become all the more relevant because every news channel is in the race of claiming to be the first to telecast the news coming from different regional, linguistic or cultural backgrounds. Similarly, the rise of tourism industry has also promoted translation because for guiding the tourists coming from alien lands, the role of interpretation or translation has become quite crucial. Quite recently, the viewers might have seen the interpreters translating Gaddafi's earnest appeal to the revolutionary rebels to have mercy on him. Similarly, the news from Tunisia, Middle-East and other countries witnessing bloody revolution could not have reached Indian subcontinent without being translated. Therefore, besides preserving the unity in diversity at national level, translation binds the entire humanity together. The popularity of comparative studies could be established only with the availability of literatures in translation. Perhaps, no comparative study can be performed in absence of translation— intra-lingual, inter-lingual or inter-semiotic.

Now a day Information Communication Technology (ICT) is also making various kinds of research to develop a software for translation purpose and not only from one particular language to another particular language but they have started to develop such kind of software that it will translate any language of the world into desired language and such kind of software technology of translation which is being evolved known as Natural Language Translation. Punjab University Chandigarh has already developed such kind of technology but that is at initial stage, a lot of has to be done. Google has also offered its translation technology but that is also not perfect, for example when google was asked to translate the following sentence " 'I' is the ninth letter of English language", than it was changed by google in Hindi as "Mein Angreji Bhasha ka Novan Pattar Hun". So, it is doubtless that ICT is also playing very important role for the development of translation studies or research related to translation but ICT in this respect has miles to go, miles to go.

So, in contemporary global scenario translation is converging all cultural divergence, linguistic divergence, spatial, temporal and ideological divergence. Thus, translation is performing very significant and essential task in redefining not only the nations but the entire globe is being redefined in contemporary scenario.

Ambedkar's philosophy has sustained so far in making the Dalits realize the fact that education is one of the most pivotal tool of empowerment and emancipation to further realize the process of sanskritisation among Dalits. Besides, Ambedkar's call to unite has also shown desired results in national politics in the recent past and it is this solidarity among Dalits that has made a dent in the socio-political Indian scenario whereas Dalits seem to occupy the centre stage in shaping the democracy through their collective voice. The legacy of Ambedkar's ideals have perhaps contributed the most in awakening the masses for the realization of human rights to one and all without discrimination. No doubt, untouchability seems to have become a phenomenon of the past at the moment when Dalit vote bank is the most decisive, we still hear of numerous instances of Dalit exploitation by dominant castes in one pretext or the other.

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