

Literary Translation of Regional Language Fiction for Emotive Cohesion

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India that is Bharat too has been a land of linguistic diversity. Under this diversity is a strong cultural and literary unity. The different languages of India underscore the implicit oneness of our glorious literary heritage. “Indian literature is one although written in many languages,” said Dr. Radhakrishnan. This idea of literary unity in the midst of linguistic multiplicity is reinforced whenever we read literature produced in various languages of India.

It is an important task to bring to the notice of a larger audience works in contemporary literature in different languages. For effective transmission, the Pan-Indian medium is English. The advantage of an English translation is that it can go beyond our national borders too. This international exposure to our literature is also beneficial.

Translation has been a valuable device for centuries to convey the best literature of one culture to people outside that culture. *The Ramayana*, *The Mahabharata*, *Iliad*, *Aeneid*, and countless other classics have traveled across cultural and temporal space through translations. In a multi-lingual and multi-cultural society such as ours, the need for translations cannot be overemphasized. They contribute to emotive cohesion. Further they bring together the diverse strands of our culture and strengthen national integration.

In this context, I recall my meeting, several years ago, the Tamil writer, Ms Sivashankari, who worked hard for producing, “Knit India through Literature.” She worked on eighteen languages of the VIII Schedule of the Indian Constitution and produced four volumes covering the literatures of the East, West, North, and South. She found many similarities in our literatures and a few dissimilarities also. For instance, the impact of partition is more pronounced in Panjabi, Sindhi and Urdu literatures than in other literatures.

Literary Translation of Regional Languages in India is neither ‘literary criticism,’ nor ‘literary assessment’ of any work of fiction. Rather, he calls his selections ‘pre-reads’ or ‘appetisers,’ in the manner of previews of films. These are sure to whet our appetite for more Indian literature. If “good samples of regional fiction” are made available through English translation to a wider reading public, a greater understanding and hence a deeper appreciation of our literatures can be achieved.

Literature has several functions and creative writing takes many forms called genres. Each genre has slightly different norms for criticism. Literary Translation has come to assume great importance in the context of translation being recognized as a genre. The need for expanding horizons of understanding between various language communities demands literary translation into and from many languages.

Literary translation evolved independent of formal training as an academic discipline. All renowned translators went to literary texts in all languages to import or export literary works in a different language. They did so without any formal training and without the basis of any theory of translation. The translators took the texts they adored and translated them. They forged ahead rendering unto their readers what they thought worthwhile in a language they thought best, to the best of their ability. A new genre “Literature in Translation” came into being.

Literary Translation is not often as formidable a task as it has often been made to appear from a reading of the works of theoreticians and academics on translation theories who are not always translators themselves. In the context of the much needed but unusual spurt in translation activity, it is essential for translators to have something like a set of guiding principles, if not a full-fledged theory in itself. In the absence of a universally valid and accepted theory, translators necessarily follow their own strategies in practice. Though there is nothing like a theory which is immediately applicable to policy, ever since literary translation came to be important in the 20th century context of promoting international understanding, literary translations have been getting reviewed. It would be possible to deduce some principles, which ultimately may yield a complete theory. But it should be borne in mind the theory has to envisage principles to suit each set of source language and target language texts.

If putting an idea into language is one kind of ‘translation’ activity, translating that into another language is another, more difficult, process. In the first instance it is less complex but the second translator poses several problems. In creative writing there is a special significance intended in the use of vocabulary and expressive devices. Aesthetic considerations play a crucial role. This leads to complex problems very frequently. There are so many ways in which a literary text can be rendered into another language. This is not the case in factual, informative writing where the purpose is comparatively narrow and limited. Poetry, for example is imaginative writing, which, usually, lends itself to a wide variety of interpretations. The translator needs to be very clever trying to make his translation as variously suggestive and as variedly communicative as the writer of the original text.

Sahridaya is essential for the appreciation of a literary text and it is no less a prime requirement for the appreciation of a translation. For a translator too it is as essential a prerequisite, for he or she has to put across the seen/imagined/felt beauty into the target language. The translator-‘transcreators’ who have ‘rendered’ the texts, for example, into Telugu from Sanskrit centuries ago, were great imaginative artists themselves. They have minds and hearts that could get into that creative frenzy to come up with a version that had been their own in many ways. Their capacity to envision and intuit has earned for them laurels, which they never imagined to accrue to them at all. They must have felt their work a way of redeeming what they believed was *rishirina*

Literary Translation can only be an enthusiast’s craft and can not be a dilettante’s profession. There is no way a person can be knowledgeable of any theory readily applicable for

use for a particular individual text. There is no particular theory for the enthusiast to follow. There are great literary translations which have stood the test of time. But there is none who propounded an all inclusive theory. None has come up with any thing like a prolegomena for any theory of literary translation.

A vast country like ours with twenty-four languages (2007) in our constitution cannot take into its ken all the regional variants of those. Our *bhashas*, languages of all the states and regions have a veritable treasure strove of literatures. Indian literatures are not just those in the language listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India. There are variations not only in language and speech. People's life styles, customs, food and clothing and, most significantly, all literatures are not the same. To take different literatures into a common and widely known, used and loved language like English, we need a battery of literary translators to put across the beauties of literary artifacts into other languages, and more importantly in English. It is not possible for all to know more than two, three or four regional languages. One has to depend naturally on the widely known and diversely spread English to read and understand more regional languages which is necessary for widening thought and imagination. *Polychromatic phantasmagoria* is not just a phrase of praise for our literatures in various languages. It is the truth of the essence of our regional literatures.

Literature has an extra-ordinary capacity to cause emotive cohesion. Reading or listening to creative writing can produce health-promoting aspects. Our extensive country with numerous languages and its variations of sub-languages has been producing literary artifacts for centuries. For national integration, among many other things, cohesion of understanding our regional language writings is necessary and the activity of literary translation needs to be cultivated and encouraged.

Regionalism subsists in Nationalism for the regional variants of custom, behavior, tradition and ethos. Regional language novels are unique in the way they depict lives of characters and incidents in the regions of the state. The sad and disturbing conditions of women, the restrictions and constraints imposed in families, areas and regions are given particular emphasis. Poverty, lack of education, backwardness in a number of other things are noticed and treated in depth and detail in our regional language novels. Even 'modernity' with its unsavoury aspects attracts the attention of the creative writer in our regional writing.

The hegemony and the hierarchies in different classes and castes are shown in depth and detail in our regional fiction. These are provocative, inspiring, painful or pride-giving in the works of writers in regional languages. Literary translators of these have to be very sensitive and understanding of these aspects while rendering vernacular language writing into English.

Out of the twenty-two languages in the Eighth Schedule, novels in only twelve languages are chosen for inclusion in this book. The numbers of the speakers of different languages are taken into consideration. Twelve languages are included in this volume with fourteen essays. Two items in Tamil and Telugu find presence here because of my personal liking of the novels. All other languages like Bodo, Dogri, Kasmiri, Konkani, Maithili, Manipuri, Nepali, Sanskrit, Santhali and Sindhi would be taken up in the next volume. It would take some time to get the translated English versions of the novels in these languages. There is time constraint for my goal is to bring out the book in the present year, 2012. Then there is constraint on the length of the book.

This is not a book of literary criticism or literary assessment. Just as there are pre-views for films, there can be pre-reads for books. Here are good samples of fiction in our regional languages. The pre-views in his work are good reads for those who cannot read the novels in the regional languages. The articles can be like appetizers to the interested readers to taste and promote understanding of the languages in our country. This attempt is to enhance our activities for national integration.

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