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TRANSLATOR BASED PROBLEMS IN TRANSLATING POETRY

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INTRODUCTION

Translating poetry is a difficult thing to carry out. While translating a poem from one language into another language, the translator has to encounter a lot of hurdles. Apart from understanding the meaning of the original and finding equivalence in the target language, there are so many factors that may constitute problems or cause changes in the translated text both at the content and form level. Here, in this paper, the author is going to analyze the factors, from the part of the translator that cause problems in rendering the literary text, particularly a poem, from one language into another language. In precise, the problems, from the part of the translator, which constitute the changes that, occur both at the content and form of the rendered version of a poem.

Andre Lefevere (2010:06) , in his well known book ‘Translating Literature: Practice and Theory in a comparative Literature Context’, says that the act of translating literary texts is ‘taking place not in a vacuum in which two languages meet but, rather, in the context of all the traditions of the two literatures’. In that act, the ‘translators mediate between literary tradition, and they do so with some goal in mind, other than that of “making the original available” in a neutral, objective way. Translations are not produced under perfect laboratory conditions’. By making this statement, Andre Lefevere accepts the fact that deviation in the TLT, from SLT, is unavoidable. He also describes the fact that the translator’s intention on translating a literary text is also be one among the major reasons why deviation occurs while translating a literary text from SL to TL.

So, the translator’s intention to render a text from the Source Language (SL) into the Target Language (TL) and his aim at translating a literary text for a particular group of audience may cause the deviation in the rendering. To prove these hypotheses the author takes the select English translated versions of ‘Tirukkural’ as examples. The paper aims at portraying the reason behind the deviations occur in the rendered versions, on the part of the translator – (i) his or her intention to render the original version for some special purpose, and (ii) translator’s aim at rendering a text for the particular group of audience, especially on the part of the content and also at the form level.

TRANSLATION FOR THE SPECIAL PURPOSE:

V.V.S. Aiyar (2007:xii), in the preface of his translated version of Tirukkural, entitled, ‘The Kural or The Maxims of Tiruvalluvar’, says that his objective in translating ‘Tirukkural’ is to ‘sow in the hearts of’ his countrymen ‘the seeds of a noble and manly life’. To full fill his objective, V.V.S. Aiyar rendered his English translated version in prose format.

The second chapter of ‘Tirukkural’ describes the greatness of rain. The second couplet of this canto goes on like this

“ Thupparkuth thuppaiya thuppakkith thupparkuth
Thuppaiy thovum malayai”

The couplet praises the rain that it helps crops to grow and also it is being used to quench thirst of the people.

V.V.S. Aiyar (2007:79) transfers the content of the couplet into English as follows:

‘Every food that is sweet to the taste is the gift of rain to man: and itself also for meth part of his food besides’

Here, in the prose rendering of the couplet, V.V.S. Aiyar to make an emphasis on the importance of rain says that the every food which is so sweet should be the gift of the rain. It is a kind of deviation at the level of content. According to the original, rain will help to grow the grains and also use to quench the thirst. Aiyar, in order to ‘sow’ the moral thoughts in the readers’ mind, uses no rhyme scheme, rendered in simple words and also be rendered in prose format.

Yogi Shuddhananda Bharati (2008:V) in the introduction of his English translated version of ‘Tirukkural’, entitled ‘Thirukkural With English Couplets’, says that he has rendered his English translated version ‘clear and simple as possible so that the kural couplets can be quoted as proverbs and also sung melodiously’. So, he has done his renderings in the couple format, as the original, and makes it with the rhyme scheme.

The second chapter of ‘Tirukkural’ describes the excellence of rain. In this chapter, the seventh couplet describes the consequences of no rain fall. According to this couplet, the water level of the sea will diminish, if the sky fails to absorb the sea water and pours it back as rain. The transliteration of that couplet is as follows:

‘Nedunkadalum thanneermai kundrum thadinthelizhi

Thannalha thahi vidin’.

Yogi Shuddhananda Bharati (2008:05) has rendered the same couplet as follows:

‘The ocean’s wealth will waste away

Except the cloud its stores repay’.

According to the original, the sea will be drained, if the rain fails. Yogi Shuddhananda Bharati, in his English rendering, says that the sea will be drained, if the cloud fail to repay or to rain. It is scientifically proved that the water on the earth, because of heat, is turned to be steam and then it will pour as rain from the cloud. The translator has translated in the sense that the cloud should repay the water to the earth, in the form of rain, as the earth has given water to it. The manner of expression is slightly changed. In the original version, there is no description of the indebtedness of the cloud. The cloud, according to the original, is mentioned as giver. There is a slight deviation in the meaning. Moreover, the original version has seven syllables alone, but, in the rendering of the translator there are more than seven syllables.

M. Rajaram (2009), in the introduction of his English translated version entitled, ‘Thirukkural: Pearls of Inspiration’, says that he made an attempt to ‘bring out the Tamil text of ‘Thirukkural’ into English in a complete form’. So, he made his renderings in the couplet format with the rhyme scheme.

The eighth chapter of ‘Tirukkural’ is on ‘Love’ or kindness. The seventh couplet of this chapter depicts the sufferings of a man who doesn’t show kindness towards others or who has no love on others. The transliteration of the above couplet is as follows:

‘Enbi lathanai veailpolak kaiymeai

Anbi lathanai aram’.

M. Rajaram (2009:17) translates the same couplet as follows:

‘As the sun burns the boneless worms

Virtue torments the loveless ones’.

Here, in the above English rendering, the translator, as he has mentioned in the introduction of his book, tried his level best to render the couplet completely, completeness in the sense of both at the content and also at the form level. Though he has made his rendering to be available in the couplet format, he has been failed to render the exact idea. According to the original, people who doesn’t show/ have love towards other people will suffer in this world like that of a worm which has been tormented by the scorching sun. The translator renders the same idea in the way that it depicts that one’s high moral standard or one’s good or desirable personal quality will torment one,



if he or she fails to show kind heartedness towards people in this world, as the sun burns the boneless worm. The translated version differs from the original at the level of content.

TRANSLATION FOR THE SPECIAL AUDIENCE:

Dr. O. R. Krishnaswami (2004: viii), in the preface of his English translated version entitled, ‘The Wisdom of Thirukkural: A Guide to Living – a Commentary’, says that he has intended to make his translated version ‘inspire and guide the readers in their sincere attempt to lead a virtuous life as shown by Thiruvalluvar’.

The fortieth chapter of ‘Tirukkural’ depicts the importance of learning. In this canto the eighth couplet enumerates that the learning/education which acquired by a man in one birth will help him in all of his seven births. It is the strong belief of the hindu people that a shoul will have seven births. The deeds of the soul, in every birth, will destine its life. Tiruvalluvar insists that the learning which acquired by the soul in one birth will surely help it but only in that birth, but also in all the seven births, in this world. The transliteration of that couplet is as follows:

‘orumaikkan thankatra kalvi oruvarukku

Elumaiyum emappu utaitu’.

O.R. Krishnaswami(2004:70) translates the same couplet as follows:

‘The learning one acquires in one birth stands him

in good stead in several births’

Here, in the rendering, O. R. Krishnaswami says that the education one acquires in one birth will help him in the following births. According to the Hindu mythology alone, people believes that one has seven births. But, O. R. Krishnaswami says that the education one learns in one birth will stand for several births. Instead of saying ‘seven births’, O. R. Krishnaswami uses the term ‘several births’. He doesn’t mention the number. It is the deviation from original.

J. Narayanasamy(2008:ix), in the preface of his translated version entitled, ‘Thirukkural :A Glasnost Spectrum of An Encrypted Life Guide Thro’ the Prism of Time’, says that he has been intended to ‘convey Thiruvalluvar’s message to those who are more at ease with English’. So, he rendered ‘Tirukkural’ into English with the couplet

format with the simple words. Here, he doesn't mention that he has made his rendering only for the English people. He says that he has made his renderings for those people who are at ease with English, they may be English people and also people who are knowing English very well.

The ninth chapter of 'Tirukkural' enumerates the greatness of hospitality. In this chapter, the sixth couplet describes the honor which should be attained by a good host. According to this couplet, one who treats his guest well and always expecting the next guest would be expected eagerly by the angles in the heaven as guest. The transliteration of that couplet is as follows:

'celvirundhu omi varuvirundhu parthuirupan

Nalvirundhu vanath thavrku'.

J. Narayanasamy (2008:29) rendered the same couplet into English as follows:

'Who come out to feed the sages and renouncers, await

Their usual guests are revered guests of noble souls'.

In the above couplet, the translator says that one who feeds sages renounces well and eagerly waits for the next guest are considered by noble souls as good guests. There is a contradiction between the original and the translated version in content. In the original, Tiruvalluvar, the author of the original text, depicts that the one who treats his guest well and eagerly expect for the upcoming guest is considered as a great guest in heaven by angels. Here, in the rendering, the translator says that the one who feeds the sages and the renowned persons and eagerly expects for the regular guest will be considered by noble souls as great guests. According to the original, there is no reference for the sages and renowned persons and there are only references for the angles not the noble souls. So, the rendering differs from the content level.

CONCLUSION:

The translator is considered as a second author, as he/she rewrites the text in another language. The act of rendering/ translating may be done to fulfill the intention of the translator. The intention may be that the rendering has been done for some special purpose and for aiming at the special/particular reading group. Here, in the above five renderings, the first three, the renderings of V.V.S. Aiyar, Yogi Shuddhananda Bharati and M. Rajaram, have been carried out to fulfill the special purpose of the translator or to fulfill the intention of the translator. The Second two, the renderings of Dr. O. R. Krishnaswami and J. Narayanasamy, have been carried out for the special

reading group. As the translators go for special purpose or for aiming at a special reading public, the deviation in the renderings are unavoidable and inseparable. Thus, in translation, deviation from the original is past and part of the activity. The translator, himself/ herself turns to be the factor for the deviation is to accepted by considering the above examples.

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