



TRANSLATION OF TELUGU SHORT FICTION INTO ENGLISH: SOME OBSERVATIONS

Surekha Rani. Kotha^{1*} . Dr. K. Sandhya²

^{1*}(Ph.D.Scholar, Acharya Nagarjuna University, Guntur.)

²(Head & Reader, Dept. of English, Maris Stella College (Autonomous), Vijayawada)



Surekha Rani. Kotha



Dr. K. Sandhya

Translation of a text is translating the source language, its ideas, its culture, its theme, its message, its environment, its attitude, its appearance and its ethnicity in total. Irrespective of the genre of the source text, the theme should not be polluted and the message must be properly conveyed as per the expectations of the author of the source text. The reader also expects the same from the translator as he expects from his author. Now-a-days, the translation has turned into an activity which can be moulded into print (books), visual (Movies from other languages), graphical (data representation of a text) and digital media (converting a story into animated movie). It is beyond limitations today. This progress is strengthened by the efforts of some services of 'Sahitya Akademi', which encourages the translators with worthy awards; the websites like 'Katha' for regional stories and for their translations; softwares like Telugu 'Lekhini'; **the inclusion of the linguistic changes made by some translators in Telugu computer phonetic keyboards etc. made the work of translation easy.** These paved the way to the rise in the number of translators. Besides, the departments of translation studies enhanced recently. As per the observation of Sachin Ketkar, 'Internationally, the shift from this normative, process-oriented and hierarchic view of translation to more descriptive, product-based, ideological and subversive view of translation emerged only with the rise of 'translation studies' as a discipline in the nineteen seventies'. These are some illustrations showing that the readers of the translated works have increased.

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Although the pace of the activity of translation is increased, the number of translations from Telugu short fiction into English is discouraging. In both streams, from Telugu to other Indian languages and from Telugu to English, the situation is the same. As Dr.Mittapalli. Rajeswarai mentions in her web document in 'Telugu People', 'The short fiction scene is equally depressing. At the most, we have about a dozen collections and anthologies of short stories available in English translation... Lovers of Telugu fiction are very likely to be disturbed by

these statistics'. Our translator, Mr.Kolluri. Soma Sankar also opines that,

From almost a decade or so, the Telugu stories started to revolve around only a few subject matters (i.e. gender, identity movements, social issues etc). Too many writers are writing on same subject... also in similar lines. Going by the trends, the English translators feel that Telugu literature as such is limited



to those streams and if you translate few stories, they represent the genre. Hence, when compared to other languages, English translations of Telugu works are less.

And it is observed that the translations from Bengali, Malayalam, Tamil, and Hindi are more when compared with Assamese, Kannada and some other Indian languages. The participation of Telugu translations is very less when compared with the other Indian languages. Infact, the production of this area does not attract many, it seems. Yet, the situation is better when compared with the previous position of the translation studies, in general, in India, but there does not appear a huge number of translations from Telugu, particularly, on the canvas of Andhra Pradesh, so far. As per the observation of Dr.Kumaraswamy Raju,

...it was rather distressing to hear that the translation scene was very bleak in Andhra and it was only of late some attempt was being made in that direction. And that too, the initiative was being taken up by institutions and not individuals to mend the situation. This perhaps was an offshoot of a general apathy towards *literature* itself, he feared. If Telugu writers were few today, the translators were fewer still... (Ramachandra, 120)

If we observe the scenario of the translation of Telugu short fiction into English, we find very few translators (both the old and the new). The list of their names with their popular works only, excluding other works, is mentioned at random for a glance. They are Ms.Alladi.Uma and Mr.Sridhar, the translator-duo, (translated and published an anthology of short stories by 'Volga' entitled 'The woman Unbound:Selected Short Stories'), Mr.Rachakonda Viswanatha Sastri ('Govulostunnayi Jagratta', which was brought out by Sahitya Akademi), Mrs.C.L.L.Jaya prada, a Reader in English literature and a translator too, (translated 'Yajnam and Other Stories' by Mr.Kalipatnam Rama Rao into English in 2006 and Mr.Kesava Reddy's work

'Athadu Adavini Jayinchandu' into English), Mrs.Jayasri MohanRaj,a translator from Telugu into English, Mr.Madhuranthakam Rajarao, [translated 'Tanu Veliginchina Deepalu' (1966), 'Vakragathulu, Ithara Kathalu' (1968),'Kamma Themmara' (1970) 'Punarnavam'(1970)], Mr. D.Kesava Rao, a poet, short story writer, (translated English short story 'Puppets', which was originally entitled as 'Keelubommalu' in Telugu), Mr. Vakati Pandu Ranga Rao, an author, translator, professional and editor of Andhra Prabha (translated into and from Tamil, Telugu, Hindi and English several stories), Dr. B.Indira, (translated 'Gender Games and Other Stories' by Kodavatiganti Kutumba Rao in 2006 and digitalized them in 2011), a writer-cum-translator Mr.Rayaprolu.Srinivas, (has to his credit an anthology of translated stories of Telugu into English 'Perspectives' is published in 2016) ,Mr. Kolluri. Soma Sankar,(translated 34 stories into Telugu from other languages), another translator-duo NS Krishna Moorthy and RS Krishna Moorthy (brought out a tetralogy of short fiction beginning since 1997 with the first one 'The Palette', second being 'The Easel' in 2015, following 'The Canvas' and 'The Painting'), Shri. K.V.Sesha Rao, an actor and translator, (translated Rajaji's 'Ramayana', 'Mahabharata', 'Upanishads' and 'Vindhiya' short stories from English into Telugu), Mr.Andy Sundaresan, a Tamil writer, (translated 'Cupid's Alarms' written by 'Prof.Sundaresan' into Telugu) , Mr.M.V. Sastry, (translated 'A Generation of Telugu Short Stories and My Own Lifescapes', Telugu Short Stories by Mr.Naveen), Mrs.Vadrevu. Vijaya Lakshmi and so on. This list concentrates on the short fiction translators only and some other might have been missed here, for the sake of brevity, but the number is less intoto. All the translators of all the languages share the common problems, but the Telugu translations might need some more pushing, may be.

To discuss the reasons briefly- there is not much encouragement for the translators; the value to the translator is less comparatively; the recognition as a translator is not given priority; an apprehension that the weak translation may damage the reputation of the author; the complexity of the cultural terms and their apt



translation into the target text due to lack of language specific dictionaries, the impossibility of the display of the cultural differences mentioned in the source text through the target language with a particular social background and so on. But, where there is a problem, there is a solution. Hence, a glance at the two translated texts 'What is My Name?' (translated by Mrs.Vadrewu Vijaya Lakshmi and Mr.Ranga Rao, from Telugu to English) and '*Hastha Laghavam*' (translated by Mr.Kolluri Soma Sankar, from English to Telugu), would be handy here.

In the translated short story 'what is My Name?' written by Mrs. P. Satyavathi originally, in Telugu with the title, '*Illalakagaane Pandagouna*', and translated by Mrs.Vadrewu.Vijaya Lakshmi and Mr. Pandu Ranga Rao into English, brings us some good examples of the 'borrowing' technique adopted here. Here, the translator borrows the words '*ammadu*', '*muggulu*', '*amma*', '*kumkum barinas*', '*yemoi*', '*pattu*', '*almirah*', '*kooja*' '*choultry*' into English. Here, the substitution of the target language does not satisfy the theme of source language, hence, the words are used as they are. This leads to the worldwide dispersal of spoken milieu of the Telugus. As Dr.SRS Kolluri, a Telugu Writer and Lecturer in Charge of the Dept.of Telugu, SKBR College, Amalapuram, has rightly said,

Yes, translations are definitely needed to our language, because our Telugu literature itself began with the translations of Sanskrit epics like 'Mahabharata', 'Ramayana' into Telugu. When Late Shri P.V.Narasimha Rao translated Shri Viswanadha Satyanarayana's commending poem 'Veyi Padagalu' into Hindi under the name, 'Sahasra Phan', the Hindi people could know the capacities of the Telugus. Thus, they let our 'Telugodi Sattha' (the abilities of the Telugu man) known to other people and we will get name and fame among other literature also.

The story 'What is My Name?' begins like this, 'A young woman, before being a housewife. A woman,

educated and cultured, and intelligent, and capable, quick-witted, with a sense of humour and elegance.'. This sentence is syntactically weak as it is translated literally to retain the tone of the source text, i.e. '*illalu kaka poorvam o yuvathi, chaduvu, sandhya, thelivi, chakachakyam, samayaphurthi, hasyam, lasyam, anni kaligina ammayi*'. But, if the translator would have taken some liberty to strengthen the syntax of the sentence, the beginning would be more effective. The same situation occurs in the translated short story '*Hastha Laghavam*' by Mr. Kolluri Soma Sankar, (originally, 'The Magician' in English by Mr. G.B.Prabhat). In this short story, a magician is motivating the customers in a restaurant telling by using all his intelligence that he is different from all other magicians. He says there are no specific tricks in the magic but the skill of using fingers. The author uses the expression with the clause 'Nothing but deft fingers...' and stops abruptly. The translator translates the phrase as it is like '*sunisithamaina chethivellu...*' and stops abruptly. This pause is readable in the English language, whereas it is not so in the Telugu language.

The same translator translated the clauses '...and muted conversation was about the only noise. The restaurant never had a band or loud dancing.' with a variation in the target language to retain the originality of the meaning as '*bhojanaala samayamlo chinna, chinna shabdaalu thappa, vere shabdaalu undavu*', but, here, the translator gave priority not to the tone, but to the locale of the situation, because there are lot of variations between the food habits and dining room manners of Indians when compared with that of the English. So, he totally compensated the information with the substitution of expression. In the same way, we can see the phrase '*Visthupoyaaruu*' to compensate the element of information available in English i.e. 'The eyebrows of most people therefore went up, even if almost imperceptibly,...'. If the translator does not take the risk of adopting this technique of condensation here, the reader will definitely be confused of the expression and not satisfied with the story.

Sometimes a term of the target language is substituted to the word in the source language, just like our '*namaste*' in Telugu in place of English's 'good morning'. In '*Hastha Laaghavam*', the phrase 'Ladies



and Gentlemen' is suggested by Mr.Kolluri Soma Sankar with similar phrase in Telugu '*Sabhaku Namaskaram*'; the title 'The Magician' is substituted by '*Hastha Laaghavam*', the compound phrase 'I-won't-be-fooled-this-time' is replaced with '*Ee saari meeru nannu mosam cheyaluru*' for the sake of proximity. When the same difficulty occurred in case of expressing '*thali*' in 'What is my Name?' the translator used so many words to express it as, 'the three sacred knots around her neck', expanding the single term into many words. Instead, it would be better if the translator has kept up the original Telugu word, giving its meaning in the foot notes, the verbal effect would be added to the text. Throughout the text, the non-identity of a well-educated woman after getting married, is highly emphasized. As it is a feminist story, the theme continues like this - an educated woman forgets herself totally after getting married to the extent of forgetting her name. After many attempts she gets to know her name and identity, when she meets her childhood friend. but it is too exaggerating that a human being ('the woman' here) forgets her name to such an extent that even her parents do not know her name. In such cases, it would be better the translator paraphrases or adds in appendix the Indian context whenever needed, like when the servant says, 'What do we have to do with names of mistresses? You are only a mistress to us' and when the children tell her 'You are *amma*-your name is *amma* only--', that there is a feeling of respect involved in both the contexts showing up the basic principles maintained at every stage in our society. Otherwise, the Indian society is disgraced nationwide. Here, the intention is not to deviate from the originality of the concept, but the care should be taken to protect the decorum of the society tinted in the source text.

Similarly, in the end of the story, '*Hastha Laghavam*', there is a sentence with ambiguity, 'There is no mistaking the anger'. Here, the red eyes of the dead pigeon, from the pocket of his long black coat, may indicate the anger of the pigeon or the magician also might be angry for the blunder committed himself for satisfying the audience, because he shows that the separated limbs of the bird are attached with his deft fingers, but actually he puts the lifeless limbs of the bird in his large pockets of the coat and

shows another live bird as a trick of his magic. In such cases the translator should contact the author for retaining the originality in the theme. These are both observations and remedies for the better outcome of a translation.

Apart from these, some translators like Mr.Ranga Rao attempt to make some modifications to the problems of translation regarding cultural aspects, which vary from country to country,. He says, a translator faces many problems regarding food, costume, family relationships, rites and rituals. He also suggests the e-factor(ethnicity factor) and t-factor(translatability factor),'The t-factor is inversely proportional to the e-factor' and some solutions like, three N's , i.e.Neutralization ('he emphasizes the need to 'wash' English of its alien colour, flavour and association.), Naturalization('the choice of the words in TL should comply with SL 'register' of the character.') and Nativization ('to retain some ethos specific expressions such as '*parikini*', '*sari*' as there are no equivalents in TL,') for the problems of translation. He prefers the use of terms of endearment such as '*chelli*', *nayana* etc., and expletives such as '*abbey*' '*ayyo*', *babbabu*' etc. and states that they act like pepper in *vada*, But a translator has to be careful because too many native expressions may make the text uninteresting for a reader of target language. As CLL Jayaprada comments in Studies in Translation, Prestige (103), '...Only later I realized too much of pepper also can make the *vada* unpalatable'. (Reddy,135). She further comments, on translating 'Cattle Thief',

'Since, I was born and brought up in the district in which the story is set, I started off with a degree of confidence. However, I found I needed help from the author in understanding the special language used by cobblers and butchers while talking about their work. I found English singularly ill-equipped to convey the sense of the swear words, native idioms, phrases and proverbs which are rooted in the rural milieu, and representative of the caste, social status and calling of the speakers.



However, with the help of the author, I tried to create a texture of the original by following closely the sentence structures and using occasional inversions, simple monosyllabic word and rendered most proverbs with as little awkwardness as possible. But, I am well aware that the authenticity of the original, which makes it so powerful, could only be conveyed partially in English. A more literal rendering could have certainly made the translation awkward.' (The Man On The Road:Contemporary Telugu Short Fiction)

In all the above cases, we have seen that unless the themes are approximate to the target culture, the translator cannot make justice to the activity. Some other then and there remedies for the problems of translation, as observed in the book 'Gold Nuggets: Selected Post-Independence Telugu Short Stories', are like this:

Translating some very difficult terms like 'baappa', 'baappa' into 'auntie', 'auntie', the common usage exists today, as equivalent to tha; Showing the long vowels of English as 'double vowels' (aa, ii,...) and diphthongs(ai, au,...) of short vowels (a, I,...); the single consonants are doubled for the sake of clarity of the letters, while using the Telugu terms exactly as given in the original script; highlighting the retro flexes like T,D,N,S,L with capitals; distinguishing of consonants from the aspirated to the unaspirated ones. (Murthy XIV-XV).

On conclusion of the paper, it is emphasized that the reason for the scarcity of the translation of Telugu short fiction, into other languages, is not only the difficulties exist in translation but also the lack of commitment towards it. If we carefully observe, we find a nominal writers, like Meena Alexander from Telugu language, writing fiction into Indian Writing in English. Means, literary writing is not the feeding profession for many here, for that matter anywhere to anyone. In addition to that, the literary commitments are low here. As Mr.G.B.Prabhat

responded to Ms. Suneeta's queries in Techgoss interview, 'the literary fiction reading revolution in India has not arrived. The popular fiction market came of age only recently.' It may be too late in Andhra Pradesh. But, the point to be noticed here is when Telugu translators grow into many, automatically the number of techniques would arise for the provision of the satisfaction of the readers spreading the sweetness of Telugu to other languages also. The 'inter-cultural' and 'intra-cultural' transformation is possible when the translation is viewed as a spectrum for diffusion of various languages, customs, cultures and traditions into other countries in the days of globalization and diaspora. In the storm of globalization, the translation of Telugu short fiction into English will become a prop up for the Telugu culture not to be wiped out. As it is the need of the hour, our writers should concentrate on more and more translations of Telugu writings, particularly short fiction, which spreads fast among readers. Cultural aspects must be translated in such a way that the struggle for searching the foreign substitutes should be avoided with the inclusion of the exact terminology from the source language, i.e.Telugu, here. And, there should be censor on the translation of languages in order either not to pollute or to convert in whichever way they like for the sake of establishing purity of the source language and saving the translators from the unknown sources spoiling their dignity. The translated titles of the English into Telugu, by film makers, strengthen my point of view. The exact Telugu translation of it sometimes gives negative connotation, instead they can use the substitutes relevant to the theme, but this is not observed at all. They give priority to the effect of the title only, but not to the concept. Some examples are shown here for further understanding. English movie names 'Die Hard' by Bruce Wills is translated into Telugu as 'Kashtamga Chavu'; 'The Mummy Returns' as 'Amma Thirigochindi'; 'Pretty Woman' As 'Katti Lanti Sthree'; 'Home Alone' as 'Intlo Vontariga'; 'Star Wars' as 'Chukkala Yuddham'; 'Taken' As 'Theesukunnadi' and so on. Sometimes, the titles are so vulgar and give negative connotation, only God knows about the nearness to its concept. 'The Mummy' means 'a dead body' in its origin, to the Greeks, but contrary to the



sentiments of India, 'The Mummy' made substitute to 'Mother'. The title setter doesn't even change as per the theme of the story. In such cases, the authors or owners must give them freedom in some cases, extending their support for the better production in the translation. Otherwise, one day the Telugu people have to look up Telugu dictionaries for the meanings of Telugu words, because lack of Telugu translations will be sufficed by English materials and extremely restricted use of literal translation will spoil the naturalness and purity of the language one day, if the situation persists like this. Hence, collaboration between the authors and the translators is needed for the safe journey of our Telugu culture through literature in the cloudy weather of post-post modernism. This is the time for projecting the personal opinion by the translator Sri Kolluri.Soma Sankar, i.e. There should be a forum for translators where all of them can meet once in two months, share feedback about their ongoing works, exchange views and ideas, document the same and submit to the persons concerned in either Universities or Government and be active on social media so their efforts gets noticed and appreciated.

Translator is in no way less than a writer. A translated work is a link between two cultures, a lingua franca of all sorts of people, demands multiple skills from the translator, an outcome of the struggle for the originality, a dias for the innovative, readymade techniques, an amalgamation of one tradition into the another. Hence, a translator is viewed as 'a mediator, mediating between two cultures and negotiating with extremes and at times philosophical concepts too which called for a great deal of care on his part' by Dr. TRS Sharma. (Ramachandra, 121) and the translations are needed for they act as a cool breeze in hot summer. Though the Reading Public is not there and the westernization counters us, there is every possibility to elevate one's culture and language through translations.

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