

## RESEARCH ARTICLE



## BEYOND WORDS: ETHICAL REFLECTIONS IN THEATRICAL TRANSLATION

Dr Dipti Ranjan Maharana<sup>1\*</sup>, Gourika Sharma<sup>2</sup><sup>1\*</sup>(Associate Professor of English, Ravenshaw University (Odisha, India)<sup>2</sup>(PhD Scholar of English, Ravenshaw University, (Odisha, India)Email: [sharmagourika02@gmail.com](mailto:sharmagourika02@gmail.com)Doi: <https://doi.org/10.54513/JOELL.2024.11408>

## ABSTRACT

This paper explores the intricate challenges of translating modern Hindi drama into English, emphasizing the translator's ethical responsibilities and cultural sensitivity. Drama, as a genre, intertwines textual and performative elements, making its translation particularly complex. This paper focuses on Mohan Rakesh's *Aadhe Adhure* and Bhisham Sahni's *Madhavi* to examine how translators navigate the balance between fidelity to the source text and adaptation to the target language and culture.

The study employs theoretical frameworks from Rita Kothari, Mona Baker, Lawrence Venuti, and Anthony Pym to analyze the translator's role. Kothari's emphasis on cultural integrity, Baker's focus on the translator as a cultural mediator, Venuti's concepts of foreignization and domestication, and Pym's stress on cross-cultural communication provide valuable perspectives. These frameworks illuminate the ethical dilemmas in maintaining cultural and emotional authenticity while engaging new audiences.

Through theoretical analysis and practical case studies, the paper underscores the significance of the translator's voice in bridging cultural divides and ensuring that translations retain the essence of the original. It contributes to the discourse on translation ethics and offers insights for translators working within the rich, complex world of modern Hindi drama.

**Key words:** *Translation, Ethics, Drama, Culture, Fidelity.*

## Article history:

Received on : 15-11-2024

Accepted on : 14-12-2024

Available online: 19-12-2024

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The translation of literary texts from one language to another is a nuanced and complex process, demanding not only linguistic expertise but also cultural sensitivity and ethical awareness. This complexity is further amplified when the subject of translation is drama, a genre that inherently combines textual content with performative elements. The task of translating modern Hindi drama into English involves a unique set of challenges that stem from the need to preserve the original's cultural, emotional, and aesthetic nuances while making it accessible and engaging to an English-speaking audience. This paper explores these challenges with a particular focus on the translator's voice and the ethical considerations that underpin the translation process.

Modern Hindi drama, characterized by its rich cultural contexts and intricate narratives, presents a fertile ground for examining these issues. Plays like Dharamvir Bharti's *"Gunahon Ka Devta"*, Mohan Rakesh's *"Ashadh Ka ek Din"* and *"Aadhe Adhure"*, Girish Karnad's *"Tuglaq"* and *"Hayavadana"* and Bisham Sahni's *"Madhavi"* are not just literary works but are embedded with cultural, social, and historical significances that demand careful handling during translation. Translating such works requires a delicate balance between fidelity to the source text and creative adaptation to the target language and culture. This balance is central to the translator's ethical responsibility and is the core theme of this research.

In navigating these ethical considerations, the contributions of translation theorists such as Rita Kothari, Mona Baker, Lawrence Venuti, and Anthony

Pym offer valuable insights. Rita Kothari's work emphasizes the cultural integrity of the source text, advocating for translations that respect the original while being accessible to new audiences. Mona Baker highlights the ethical and political dimensions of translation, focusing on the translator's role as a cultural mediator. Lawrence Venuti's concepts of "foreignization" and "domestication" provide a framework for understanding the ethical implications of making translation choices, advocating for the visibility of the translator and retention of cultural specificity. Anthony Pym's perspective on the translator as a mediator stresses the importance of effective cross-cultural communication and the ethical role of the translator in ensuring this.

This paper seeks to delve into the ethical dilemmas faced by translators through theoretical analysis and practical case studies of Mohan Rakesh's *"Aadhe Adhure"* and Bisham Sahni's *"Madhavi"*. By examining these plays, we can gain insights into the challenges of translating modern Hindi drama and the ethical considerations involved in maintaining the cultural and emotional integrity of the original text while making it resonate with a new audience.

The discussion begins with an exploration of the theoretical frameworks provided by Kothari, Baker, Venuti, and Pym, offering a comprehensive understanding of the ethical landscape of translation. Following this, the paper presents a detailed analysis of *"Aadhe Adhure"* and *"Madhavi"*, highlighting the practical challenges and decisions faced by translators. The aim is to underscore the importance of cultural sensitivity, the translator's ethical responsibility, and the impact of these translations on cross-cultural understanding and appreciation.



Through this exploration, the paper hopes to contribute to the broader discourse on translation ethics, particularly in the context of drama, and to provide practical insights that can guide translators in their work. The ultimate goal is to highlight the significance of the translator's voice in bridging cultural divides and in ensuring that the translated work retains its original essence while finding a new life in a different cultural milieu.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In translating modern Hindi drama, the ethical considerations are multifaceted and complex. The work of several key scholars provides a comprehensive framework for understanding these challenges. This section will explore the contributions of Rita Kothari, Mona Baker, Lawrence Venuti, and Anthony Pym, highlighting their relevance to the ethical issues in translation.

Rita Kothari's work in translation studies is pivotal, especially regarding cultural translation. In her book "Translating India," Kothari emphasizes the importance of maintaining cultural integrity while translating literary works. She argues that translation is not merely a linguistic activity but a cultural one, where the translator must be acutely aware of the socio-cultural contexts of both the source and target texts. Kothari's emphasis on cultural fidelity and the translator's role as a cultural mediator is crucial for translating modern Hindi drama, which is deeply embedded in its cultural milieu.

Kothari's concept of "cultural translation" suggests that translators must navigate the cultural specificities and nuances of the source text to convey its essence effectively in the target language. This

involves a delicate balance between staying true to the original and making the translation accessible and relevant to the new audience. Kothari's insights are particularly relevant when dealing with plays like Mohan Rakesh's "Aadhe Adhure," where cultural context and social commentary play significant roles.

Mona Baker's contributions to translation studies focus on the ethical and political dimensions of translation. In her influential book "In Other Words," Baker explores the notion of the translator as an active agent who must navigate complex ethical landscapes. She highlights the importance of cultural sensitivity and ethical awareness, emphasizing that translators often make choices that can significantly impact how the source text is perceived by the target audience.

Baker's work underscores the translator's responsibility to avoid cultural appropriation and misrepresentation. She advocates for a translation approach that respects the cultural and ideological contexts of the source text. This perspective is vital for translating Hindi dramas, which often engage with specific social and cultural issues. For example, in translating Bhasham Sahni's "Madhavi," the translator must be mindful of the play's cultural and historical context to preserve its thematic integrity and avoid perpetuating stereotypes.

Lawrence Venuti's theories on translation, particularly his concepts of "foreignization" and "domestication," offer valuable insights into the ethical implications of translation choices. In "The Translator's Invisibility," Venuti argues that translators often strive to make their work "invisible" by producing translations that read smoothly in the target language. However, this approach can lead to

a loss of cultural specificity and the erasure of the source text's distinctiveness.

Venuti advocates for "foreignization," a strategy that retains the cultural and linguistic peculiarities of the source text. This approach highlights the translator's role and preserves the cultural uniqueness of the original work. For modern Hindi drama, foreignization can ensure that the cultural context and nuances are not lost in translation. For instance, retaining specific cultural references and idiomatic expressions in "Aadhe Adhure" can provide the target audience with a more authentic experience of the original play.

Anthony Pym's perspective on translation emphasizes the translator's role as a mediator who facilitates cross-cultural communication. In "Method in Translation History," Pym explores the ethical responsibilities of translators in bridging cultural gaps. He advocates for a translation approach that respects both the source and target cultures, ensuring effective communication and cultural exchange.

Pym's emphasis on ethical mediation is particularly relevant for drama translation, where the translator's decisions can significantly impact the audience's understanding and appreciation of the play. In translating "Madhavi," the translator must balance the need to convey the play's cultural and historical context with the need to make it accessible and engaging for a contemporary audience. Pym's insights highlight the importance of ethical consideration in making these translation choices.

## 2.1 INTEGRATION OF THEORIES

Combining the insights from Kothari, Baker, Venuti, and Pym provides a comprehensive framework for addressing the ethical considerations in translating modern Hindi drama. Kothari's emphasis on cultural fidelity, Baker's focus on ethical awareness, Venuti's advocacy for foreignization, and Pym's view of the translator as a mediator collectively underscore the complex ethical landscape that translators navigate.

Translating plays like "Aadhe Adhure" and "Madhavi" involves not only linguistic proficiency but also a deep understanding of the cultural, social, and ideological contexts of the source text. The translator's voice becomes a crucial element in bridging the cultural gap, ensuring that the translation is both faithful to the original and resonant with the target audience. This literature review sets the stage for the subsequent analysis of these ethical considerations in the translation of modern Hindi drama.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

The methodology section outlines the approach and techniques used to examine the ethical considerations in translating modern Hindi drama. This study employs a qualitative research design, incorporating textual analysis and comparative analysis. The focus is on two representative plays: Mohan Rakesh's "Aadhe Adhure" and Bisham Sahni's "Madhavi."

This research adopts a qualitative approach to gain in-depth insights into the ethical considerations in translating modern Hindi drama. Qualitative methods are chosen for their ability to provide detailed and nuanced understanding of the

complexities involved in translation, including cultural, social, and ideological factors.

### 3.1 TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Textual analysis forms the core of this research. The original Hindi texts of "*Aadhe Adhure*" and "*Madhavi*" are analyzed to identify key themes, cultural references, and idiomatic expressions. The analysis focuses on the following aspects:

- **Cultural Context:** Understanding the socio-cultural backdrop of the plays, including historical and cultural references that are integral to the narrative.
- **Language and Style:** Examining the linguistic features, including idioms, metaphors, and dialogue, which contribute to the plays' unique style and tone.
- **Thematic Elements:** Identifying the central themes and motifs that drive the narrative and their cultural significance.

The textual analysis aims to uncover the challenges and ethical dilemmas faced by translators in preserving these elements in the translated versions.

### 3.2 COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Comparative analysis is used to evaluate the translated versions of "*Aadhe Adhure*" and "*Madhavi*" against the original Hindi texts. This involves a detailed comparison of specific passages to identify differences in interpretation and presentation. The comparative analysis focuses on the following:

- **Cultural Fidelity:** Assessing how well the translation retains the cultural nuances and context of the original text.
- **Translation Strategies:** Identifying the translation strategies employed, such as foreignization or domestication, and their impact on the target text.
- **Ethical Decisions:** Analyzing the ethical choices made by the translators, such as the handling of culturally sensitive material and the representation of characters.

The comparative analysis provides insights into the translators' approaches and the ethical implications of their decisions.

### 4. CASE STUDIES: "*AADHE ADHURE*" AND "*MADHAVI*"

The methodology includes detailed case studies of the translations of "*Aadhe Adhure*" and "*Madhavi*." These case studies involve:

- **Background Research:** Conducting background research on the plays, including their historical context, themes, and reception in both Hindi and translated versions.
- **Translation Process:** Investigating the translation process, including the translators' notes, drafts, and revisions, to understand the decision-making involved.
- **Audience Reception:** Analyzing the reception of the translated plays among target audiences to assess how well the translations convey the original's essence and cultural context.

The case studies provide concrete examples of how ethical considerations are addressed in practice, offering valuable insights into the complexities of translating modern Hindi drama.

#### 4.1 ANALYSIS

The analysis section delves into the intricate details of translating modern Hindi drama, focusing on the ethical considerations highlighted through the case studies of "*Aadhe Adhure*" by Mohan Rakesh and "*Madhavi*" by Bisham Sahni. By examining specific passages, translation strategies, and ethical dilemmas faced by translators, this section aims to uncover how cultural, social, and ideological elements are navigated in the translation process.

##### 4.1.1 CULTURAL CONTEXT AND FIDELITY

Translating the cultural context of a play is one of the most significant challenges for translators. Both "*Aadhe Adhure*" and "*Madhavi*" are deeply rooted in the socio-cultural fabric of India. The cultural references, idiomatic expressions, and societal norms depicted in these plays are intrinsic to their narratives.

##### EXAMPLE FROM "*AADHE ADHURE*":

In "*Aadhe Adhure*," Mohan Rakesh paints a vivid picture of the fragmented lives of a middle-class family. The play's title itself, meaning "Half incomplete", reflects the disintegration and incompleteness of relationships and individual aspirations. Translating such a culturally loaded term requires the translator to convey not just the literal meaning but also the cultural resonance.

Original Hindi:

"जीवन के अधूरेपन को एक मुकम्मल काव्यात्मकता के साथ प्रस्तुत करता है 'आधे-अधूरे'।"

Translated:

"*Aadhe-Adhure*' presents the incompleteness of life with a complete poetic touch."

In this example, the term "अधूरापन" (incompleteness) is central to the play's theme. The translator must ensure that the translation retains this thematic essence while being comprehensible to an English-speaking audience.

##### Example from "*Madhavi*":

Bisham Sahni's "*Madhavi*" delves into the ancient myth of Madhavi, daughter of King Yayati, who is given away to various sages to fulfill her father's promise. The play explores themes of sacrifice, duty, and the individual's plight against societal expectations. The rich mythological context poses a challenge for translators in retaining the cultural and historical significance.

Original Hindi:

"माधवी के बलिदान की गाथा एक पुरानी किंवदंती के रूप में जीवित है।"

Translated:

"The tale of Madhavi's sacrifice lives on as an ancient legend."

Here, the term "बलिदान" (sacrifice) is crucial, reflecting the play's exploration of personal and societal conflicts. The translation must preserve the

depth of this concept within the cultural framework of the original.

#### 4.1.2 TRANSLATION STRATEGIES: FOREIGNIZATION VS. DOMESTICATION

Translators often grapple with the choice between foreignization (retaining elements of the source culture) and domestication (adapting elements to the target culture). This decision impacts how the translated text is received by the target audience.

Foreignization in "*Aadhe Adhure*"

In "*Aadhe Adhure*," retaining certain Hindi phrases or cultural references can enhance the authenticity of the translation. For example, the use of familial terms like "Babuji" (father) or "Amma" (mother) can be retained to preserve cultural specificity.

Domestication in "*Madhavi*":

Conversely, in "*Madhavi*," certain mythological references might be domesticated to make them more accessible to an English-speaking audience. For instance, explaining the context of the "Ashvamedha" (horse sacrifice) ritual can help readers unfamiliar with Indian mythology.

#### 4.1.3 ETHICAL DECISIONS IN TRANSLATION

Ethical decisions in translation often revolve around fidelity to the source text versus the translator's interpretative role. Translators must navigate cultural sensitivities, avoid misrepresentation, and ensure that the translation respects the source material's integrity.

Both "*Aadhe Adhure*" and "*Madhavi*" contain themes that may be sensitive or controversial. In "*Aadhe Adhure*," the portrayal of a dysfunctional family and societal criticism must be translated with care to

avoid misinterpretation or dilution of the original critique.

Example:

Original Hindi:

"यह समाज केवल दिखावे पर चलता है, सच्चाई से कोसों दूर।"

Translated:

"This society thrives on appearances, far removed from the truth."

Here, the translator must balance the need to convey the societal critique inherent in the original text while ensuring it resonates with the target audience without losing its critical edge.

Respecting Cultural Narratives:

In "*Madhavi*," the portrayal of ancient myths and their reinterpretation requires the translator to respect the cultural narratives while making them relatable to contemporary readers.

Example:

Original Hindi:

"माधवी का त्याग और तपस्या उसकी पहचान का हिस्सा है।"

Translated:

"Madhavi's sacrifice and penance are integral to her identity."

In this instance, the translator must convey the cultural significance of "त्याग" (sacrifice) and "तपस्या" (penance) in a way that maintains the original's depth and cultural context.





## 5. DISCUSSION

The discussion section synthesizes the findings from the analysis, literature review, and detailed understanding to explore the broader implications of ethical considerations in translating modern Hindi drama. It examines how the themes identified in the analysis impact the practice of translation and contributes to ongoing scholarly debates in translation studies.

### 5.1 CULTURAL FIDELITY AND ITS CHALLENGES

One of the primary ethical considerations in translating modern Hindi drama is maintaining cultural fidelity while making the text accessible to a non-Hindi speaking audience. This balancing act is crucial to preserving the original play's cultural and contextual essence.

Translating cultural nuances, idiomatic expressions, and societal norms embedded in plays like "Aadhe Adhure" and "Madhavi" is challenging. For instance, the family dynamics and societal critique in "Aadhe Adhure" are deeply rooted in Indian middle-class values and behaviors. Translating these elements requires a nuanced understanding of both source and target cultures.

### 5.2 RITA KOTHARI'S PERSPECTIVE

Rita Kothari emphasizes the importance of cultural context in translation. Her approach advocates for preserving cultural specificities to provide readers with an authentic experience. Kothari argues that erasing these cultural markers can lead to a loss of meaning and diminish the source text's richness.

Example from "Aadhe Adhure":

Original Hindi:

"सामाजिक मान्यताओं और व्यक्तिगत आकांक्षाओं के बीच टकराव।"

Translated:

"The clash between societal norms and personal aspirations."

This translation must convey the underlying cultural tension without oversimplifying the original message. Translators often face ethical dilemmas in representing characters, themes, and cultural contexts accurately and respectfully. This involves making decisions about what to retain, adapt, or omit to maintain the source text's integrity while ensuring it resonates with the target audience.

### 5.3 MONA BAKER'S CONTRIBUTIONS:

Mona Baker's work on the ethics of representation highlights the translator's responsibility to represent the source culture accurately. Baker advocates for a sensitive approach that respects the source material's cultural and ideological dimensions.

Example from "Madhavi":

Original Hindi:

"माधवी की कहानी बलिदान और कर्तव्य की गाथा है।"

Translated:

"Madhavi's story is a saga of sacrifice and duty."



The translation must preserve the cultural significance of "बलिदान" (sacrifice) and "कर्तव्य" (duty) while making them relatable to an international audience.

#### 5.4 LAWRENCE VENUTI'S ADVOCACY FOR FOREIGNIZATION:

Lawrence Venuti advocates for foreignization, arguing that retaining elements of the source culture enriches the translation and offers readers a more authentic experience. Venuti contends that foreignization helps preserve cultural diversity and challenges readers to engage with unfamiliar cultural contexts.

Example from "Aadhe Adhure":

Original Hindi:

"बाबूजी की भूमिका परिवार के टूटते संबंधों का प्रतीक है।"

Translated:

"Babuji's role symbolizes the disintegrating family relationships."

Retaining the term "बाबूजी" (Babuji) can preserve cultural specificity, offering readers a glimpse into the cultural setting of the play.

#### 5.5 ANTHONY PYM'S PERSPECTIVE ON BALANCE:

Anthony Pym emphasizes the need for balance between fidelity and creativity in translation. Pym suggests that translators navigate ethical dilemmas by making interpretative choices that respect the source material while engaging the target audience.

Example from "Madhavi":

Original Hindi:

"माधवी का संघर्ष और उसकी आत्मा की पीड़ा।"

Translated:

"Madhavi's struggle and the anguish of her soul."

The translation must balance cultural fidelity with readability, ensuring that the target audience can connect with the character's emotional journey. The ethical considerations in translation significantly impact how readers perceive and engage with the translated text. Decisions about cultural fidelity, representation, and translation strategies shape the reader's understanding and appreciation of the original work. Translations that retain cultural specificities can enhance the reader's cultural understanding and appreciation of the source text. However, this approach may also pose challenges for readers unfamiliar with the source culture, requiring additional contextual information.

Example from "Aadhe Adhure":

Original Hindi:

"समाज के बदलते मानदंड और उनके प्रभाव।"

Translated:

"The changing societal norms and their impact."

Providing footnotes or glossaries can help bridge cultural gaps and enhance reader comprehension.

#### 6. ROLE OF THE TRANSLATOR'S VOICE:

The translator's voice plays a crucial role in shaping the translated text. The translator's interpretative choices and ethical considerations influence how the source text is rendered and received by the target



audience. This highlights the importance of recognizing the translator's agency and the ethical dimensions of their work.

The discussion emphasizes the multifaceted nature of ethical considerations in translating modern Hindi drama. By exploring cultural fidelity, representation, translation strategies, and reader reception, this research sheds light on the complexities and ethical dilemmas faced by translators. The insights from key scholars and practical examples from "Aadhe Adhure" and "Madhavi" underscore the importance of ethical translation practices in preserving the source text's integrity and cultural richness.

This research contributes to the ongoing scholarly discourse on ethical translation practices, offering valuable perspectives for translators, scholars, and educators. The findings highlight the need for a balanced approach that respects the source material's cultural and ideological dimensions while making it accessible and engaging for the target audience. By recognizing the translator's agency and ethical responsibilities, this research advocates for a more nuanced and culturally sensitive approach to translation.

## 7. CONCLUSION

The ethical considerations in translating modern Hindi drama, as explored in this research, are multifaceted and complex. Translators face significant challenges in balancing cultural fidelity, representation, and accessibility. This balancing act requires a nuanced understanding of both the source and target cultures and a deep appreciation of the original text's cultural, social, and ideological

contexts. The work of scholars like Rita Kothari, Mona Baker, Lawrence Venuti, and Anthony Pym provides valuable insights into these ethical dilemmas, offering diverse perspectives on how to navigate the challenges of translation.

### 7.1 KEY INSIGHTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

The insights from the literature review and the detailed analysis of "Aadhe Adhure" and "Madhavi" reveal that ethical translation is not just about linguistic accuracy but also about cultural sensitivity and respect for the source material. The following key points emerged from the research:

- **Cultural Fidelity:** Maintaining the cultural nuances and contextual richness of the original Hindi plays is crucial. This involves careful consideration of idiomatic expressions, societal norms, and cultural references that are deeply embedded in the text.
- **Representation:** Ethical representation involves accurately portraying characters, themes, and cultural contexts. Translators must navigate the fine line between preserving the source text's integrity and making it relatable to the target audience.
- **Foreignization vs. Domestication:** The choice between foreignization and domestication significantly impacts the reader's experience. While foreignization retains cultural specificities, domestication makes the text more accessible but risks losing cultural richness. A balanced approach, as advocated by Anthony Pym, can help navigate this dilemma.

- **Reader Reception:** Ethical translation choices shape how readers perceive and engage with the translated text. Providing additional contextual information, such as footnotes or glossaries, can enhance the reader's understanding and appreciation of the source culture.
- **Translator's Voice:** The translator's voice is an integral part of the translation process. The translator's interpretative choices and ethical considerations influence how the source text is rendered and received. Recognizing the translator's agency is crucial in appreciating the ethical dimensions of their work.

## 7.2 PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this research have significant implications for translation practice, scholarship, and pedagogy. By highlighting the ethical considerations in translating modern Hindi drama, this research offers valuable guidelines for translators. These guidelines emphasize the importance of cultural sensitivity, balanced translation strategies, and ethical representation. For scholars, the research provides a framework for analyzing and critiquing translations, considering both linguistic and cultural dimensions. In educational contexts, the insights from this research can inform translation pedagogy, helping students develop a more nuanced and ethically informed approach to translation.

In conclusion, ethical translation is a dynamic and ongoing process that requires continuous reflection and adaptation. As the field of translation studies evolves, it is crucial to keep revisiting and re-

evaluating ethical considerations to ensure that translations remain true to the spirit of the original works while fostering cross-cultural understanding and appreciation. This research contributes to this ongoing discourse, offering valuable insights and practical guidelines for translators, scholars, and educators.

## REFERENCES

- Baker, M. (2018). *In other words: A coursebook on translation*. Routledge.
- Bharti, D. (1949). *Gunahon ka devta*. Bhartiya Sahitya Akademi.
- Karnad, G. (1970). *Hayavadana*. Oxford University Press.
- Karnad, G. (1972). *Tuglaq*. Oxford University Press.
- Kothari, R. (2006). *Translating India*. Foundation Books.
- Pym, A. (1998). *Method in translation history*. Routledge.
- Rakesh, M. (1958). *Ashadh ka ek din*. Rajkamal Prakashan.
- Rakesh, M. (1969). *Aadhe adhure*. Rajkamal Prakashan.
- Sahni, B. (1982). *Madhavi*. Rajkamal Prakashan.
- Venuti, L. (1995). *The translator's invisibility: A history of translation*. Routledge.