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CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF BHARATHIDASAN'S WORKS IN TRANSLATION

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the untranslatability of Bharathidasan's poems. The researcher tries to compare three translated versions of three different translators. In this research article it is explained that translation poses several challenges to a translator. There are difficulties based on cultural level and word level. The different experiences of the three translators in translating Bharathidasan's works have been dealt with at length in this research article. The use of dynamic equivalent and theories of Nida and Catford have been discussed and examined whether the translators are able to succeed in their endeavours.

Keywords: Translation, Cultural Translation, Word to Word Translation, Dynamic Equivalence

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INTRODUCTION

Bharathidasan is one of the greatest poets of modern period in our country. He gave us a rich collection of long and short poems and some plays. In some of his longer poems, he tries to evoke the vision of an ideal casteless and classless society. In his poems, he glorifies the toil of the masses, the beauties of the Tamil language and the splendor of the South Indian nature. He is the poetic descendant of Bharathiyar. Having come in close contact with Bharathiyar. he changed his original name-Kanaga subburathinam-as Bharathidasan, which means the devotee of Bharathiyar. With his versatility, Bharathidasan sang for the welfare of the world. If Bharathiyar could be considered as a 'gun' in condemning the social injustice, Bharathidasan could be compared to a 'canon'. He sang for the eradication of slavery of women, development of the Tamil language and development of the Tamils.

Translation

Bharathidasan felt that the greatness of Bharathiyar could be let known to the whole world only when his works are translated into English and other languages. There had been many attempts to translate the works of Bharathiyar. Fortunately, Bharathidasan's works too have been chosen for translation. The translator have endeavored to give life to their translations. Their achievements are only on degrees as every translation is only an experiment.

Catford(1965:20) defines translation as the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by the equivalent textual material in another language(TL). According to him, the main problem of translation practice is finding target language equivalents. Literary translation is much more complex than other translations. Every literary text is linked with literary and cultural tradition of the language in which it was written. Within the literary tradition, poetic translation is much more difficult because poems are read for their aesthetic values. To capture the imagination of the poet by someone else is very difficult. Unless the original experience is recreated, no translation however perfect by anything but lifeless (L.Ramamoorthy 2002:93)

Translated Versions of Bharathidasan's Works

L. Ramamurthy (2006:141) has attempted to evaluate the translations of three translators viz Thangappa, Maruthanayagam and Ganapathy. Bharathidasan employs words in such a manner that they produce an illusion on the senses. The aesthetic beauty he creates with his words cannot easily be translated by any of the translators.

Adjectives

L. Ramamurthy gives a list of adjectives and epithets that pose a challenge to the translators.

Bharathidasan's Verses	Translated Version
செந்தமிழ்	Pristine Tamil, Tamil rich, Tamil pristine
தகத் தகாயத் தமிழ்	Glory of Tamil, Sparkling Tamil
மங்காத தமிழ்	Ever splendidous Tamil
இன்பத் தமிழ்	Sweet Tamil
முத்தமிழ்	Triangle Tamil
பாலொடு நேர் தமிழ்	Nectarine Tamil
ஒண்டமிழ்	Sweet Tamil
தெள்ளு தமிழ்	Classic Tamil
இனிதாகிய தமிழ்	My sweet Tamil
தாயெழிற்றமிழ்	To see mother Tamil
பண்ணிடைத் தமிழ்	Rising music and Tamil
இசையாம் தமிழ்	Sweet, rich Tamil its music

Some of the adjectives are left untouched by the translators. Unable to find dynamic equivalents they have simply added 'sweet' in every attempt.

Cultural Words

There are certain linguistic and cultural items in Bharathidasan's verses that could not be translated in English because of linguistic and cultural differences. Moreover, there are some poetic collocations, which defy translation attempts. By his inimitable selection of words, Bharathidasan creates an imagery of higher order. The high imagination of Bharathidasan is very difficult to be captured by the translators.

The following cultural words are transliterated in the translations.

பொங்கல், காந்தள் பூ, கொன்றை, யாழ், ஆடி

The translators also employ some near-equivalents, which are acceptable.

குயில் - cuckoo and சேல் - Sol man fish

Omission

The translators leave out some cultural elements, For example

‘ஒண்டமிழ்த் தாய் சிலம்படியின்

முன்னேற்றம் ஒவ்வொன்றும்

உன் முன்னேற்றம்.’

Is translated as

‘Each forward step of Tamil

Is your own progress, my Tamil youth’. (Dendran p298)

Here the word ‘cilambu’ has been left in the target version.

Addition and Omission

In some cases, some words are left untranslated and in some cases, additional words are employed to translate the Source Languages Texts. In some cases, a kind of paraphrasing has been attempted.

In the following cases, we can notice this.

SL: நனியுண்டு நனியுண்டு காதல்

TL: Intense love for Tamil (p164)

SL: சொல் தச்சு

TL: Cleverly moth his words (p440)

SL: பேரறிவாளர்

TL: Thinker Great (p440)

Structural Variation in Translation

The translators may change the structural order of the original in order to be more intelligible to the target audience. Sometimes the structural construction of the SL text may defy retention of the same construction, in the target text also. For example, Dr. Murugan has translated the following poem of Bharathidasan.

இரவு தங்கிப்

பகலில் வந்த என்

வரவுக்கு மனைவி

கண் சிவந்தாள்

மலர் வானம் சென்றேன்

அங்கும்

அலரி கண் சிவந்தது

முல்லை சிரித்ததே.

as:

The jasmine laughed at my plight

My return the next day

After overnight stay away from home

Witnessed my wife’s reddened eyes

And to the flower garden I retired,

There too

The sweet scented oleander wore reddened eyes

And the jasmine laughed at me.

‘என் வரவுக்கு மனைவி கண் சிவந்தாள்’

Is translated as

‘My return witnessed my wife’s reddened eyes’.

The poet has used 'my return' as the 'subject' of the sentence and made a structural rearrangement. Similarly, Dr. Ramar Ilango has attempted to translate Bharathidasan's poem.

இருளினை வறுமை நோயை

இடறுவேன்: என்னுடல்மேல்

உருள்கின்ற பகைக்குன்றை நான்

ஒருவனே உதைப்பேன், நீயோ

கருமான்செய் படையின் வீடு!

நான் அங்கோர் மறவன்! கன்னற்

பொருள் தரும் தமிழே நீ ஓர்

பூங்காடு; நானோர் தும்பி

The translated version is

I shall knock down

The poverty, the darkness;

I will kick away

All by myself

The mountain group

Of enemies;

Oh, Tamil, you are

The blacksmith's workshop of arms

Where I am a soldier;

Oh, Tamil the bestower of sweet things

You are a forest of flower

Where I am a bee.

The verbs in the Source Language Text are இடறுவேன், உதய்ப்பேன் etc.,

There the 'subject' 'I' is not overtly given. Verbs in Tamil denote the 'number' 'gender' and 'tense'. Hence the translator has aptly used the 'subject' 'I', and has done his translation. He has inferred the "I" and rearranged his sentences beginning with the subject 'I'.

ONOMATOPOEIA

Some words the actual sound made by the action. The word itself stands for the sound of the action. Such words pose a difficulty to the translator. For e.g.,

கொஞ்சம் குயில் ஒன்று

கூ கூ என்றது

தென்றலால் அசைந்த

செவ்விதழ் அல்லிதான்

இகழ்ச்சி சீழ்க்கை

அடித்ததாய்த்

தகாதிது தடாபுடா

என்றது தவளையே

Is translated as

The prattling cuckoo bawled 'coo coo'

Taking it for a whistle of dispraise

By the red-petalled lily waving in the breeze

The frog croaked out a clamor of protest.

Dr Murugan verse 99)

Conclusion

We can conclude the discussion that translation of Bharathidasan's works is difficult. Translation varies from person to person. Anyhow, more and more translators should come forward to take the ideas of Bharathidasan to different corners of the world.

"It is through the windows and doors of translation that one language reaches the other language" Rattu; (200:3). though the translator faces some difficulties in his endeavour, it is a pleasure for him to present the knowledge, wisdom and experience conveyed in the original text to the target reader in an enjoyable manner.

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