



## A Critical Study Of Translation Activities In India

Dr. Boni D. Joshi\*

\*Assistant Professor, English, Department of Science and Humanities, L.D.College of Engineering, Ahmedabad. bonnyjoshi@gmail.com

**Citation:** Dr. Boni D. Joshi (2024). A Critical Study Of Translation Activities In India, *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice*, 30(1) 8307-8310  
Doi: 10.53555/kuey.v30i1.11414

### ARTICLE INFO

### ABSTRACT

Present research article aims at tracing and evaluating the activities of translation in India through ages. The three time-zones selected here are before, during and after colonial times. The paper also examines the reducing dominance of Sanskrit language replaced by ascendancy of various foreign languages starting from Persian to English. The paper also tries to give an insight into the politics of language and how contemporary translation scenario is thriving in Indian academia.

**Keywords:** Translation, India, English, Multilingualism

### History of Translation Activities in India

Three major phases can be distinguished in the history of translation in India: pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial. These periods are distinguished more by the patterns of translation than by the content that was translated. There is a consensus among the majority of scholars in this field regarding this periodization, despite the fact that the titles that are assigned to each of these periods may differ. The names of these eras give the impression that they encompass a wide range of centuries. The time beginning in antiquity and ending in the 18th century would be referred to as the pre-colonial period. The period beginning in the 18th century and ending in 1947 would be referred to as the colonial period. The period beginning in 1947 and continuing forth would be referred to as the post-colonial period. One of the events that is regarded to have marked the beginning of the pre-colonial era was the Battle of Plassey, which took place in 1757. This battle was essential in the British establishing their supremacy in India and transforming into an imperialist state through expansionist strategies. Prior to the development and flourishing of foreign languages such as Persian and other Indian languages, Sanskrit was the language that was spoken by the greatest number of people. We will be able to correctly position the translations that were finished during the colonial and post-colonial periods if we begin by analyzing translation from the pre-colonial era.

It has previously been shown that multilingualism, which is defined as the simultaneous coexistence of numerous languages in everyday speech or in a literary work, was quite prevalent. If translations were produced at all, they had to be from Sanskrit to Prakrit instead of the other way around. Avadhesh Kumar Singh makes the observation that the "bhashya," which is a commentary on sacred writings, the tika, which is a sub-commentary, and the "anvaya," which is an explanation of meaning or interpretation, that were produced during that time period were akin to translation efforts. This is despite the fact that there were no meaningful translations at the time. Gopinathan asserts that these translations were referred to as "chhaya," which might be translated as "translation as shadow of the original text" ("Translation, Transcreation, and Culture": 1) However, this does not imply that the translation is an exact replica of the original source. It contends instead that the translator's point of view may affect the translation in the same way as the brightness and angle of a light source affect the shadow cast by an item.

### Translation in Pre-Colonial Era:

Several versions of the epics have been translated into Indian languages, making the concept of producing a new book from an existing one quite clear. Because they convert information from the Vedas and other scriptural sources from Sanskrit into everyday vernacular, Bhakti poets may be considered translators. The practice of teaching Sanskrit knowledge to 'lokbhasha,' or the languages spoken by common people, is referred to as Lokbhashikaran by Avadhesh Kumar Singh ("Translation in/and Hindi Literature": 3). Singh considers *lokbhashikaran* to have occurred between 1100 and 1700. Furthermore, the Ramayana and Mahabharata were being translated into Indian languages at this period. The Ramcharitmanas were written in Hindi by Tulsidas, the Ramayana in Tamil by Kamba, the Adhyatma Ramayanam in Malayalam by Ezhuthachchan, the Sarala

Mahabharata in Oriya by Sarala Das, and so forth. The fact that each of these was a transcreation written especially for a particular culture and place should be emphasized. Naturally, equivalency was not given much weight in the Indian oral tradition, which is the setting in which these translations were created..

The arrival of Persians in Delhi coincided with the rise of Mughal dominance, which occurred concurrently with the gradual decline of Sanskrit influence. Alberuni, a well-known author and traveler, had already contributed to the translation of Sanskrit masterpieces into Arabic previously. It is said that Akbar kept a translator's office (maktab khana) in his court. The primary purpose of this office was to bring peace to the conflict that existed between the Hindus and Muslims in his reign. There were Hindu religious classics written in Sanskrit that were included in the translated contents. In addition to improving Muslims' perceptions of Hindus, this appears to have cleared the door for more cooperation amongst people of different faiths. The Yoga-vashishta, the Ramayana, and the Mahabharata were among the books that were translated into other languages including English. A scholar named Dara Shikoh was completely enthralled by the Upanishads' philosophical underpinnings. The purpose of his translation was to gain a deeper comprehension of Hindu philosophy and to ascertain whether or not Islamic and Hindu concepts shared any conceptual parallels. As was the case with a significant number of his predecessors and successors, Firozeshah Tughluk initiated the process of translating religious books written in Sanskrit into Persian. The goal of these translations was to improve one's understanding of another religion and to discover methods in which one may enhance the effectiveness of collaboration. There is a possibility that they could be considered political activity in addition to language exercises.

### **Translation and Colonialism:**

Furthermore, this era must be split into two separate parts: the First War of Indian Independence, which lasted from 1757 to 1857, and the Second War of Indian Independence, which lasted from 1857 to 1957. The British Empire defeated the East India Company in the latter conflict. The East India Company aimed to improve its reputation in India in the years after 1757. In 1784, Sir William Jones established the Asiatic Society in Kolkata, which is considered to be a highly significant event that occurred during this time period. During the time period known as the Orientalist period, the British maintained a particular fascination with ancient Sanskrit texts as well as other nonliterary works. There has been a frenzy of effort in the field of translation, with books as varied as Manusmriti and Abhinjanasakuntalam being translated. This cannot be considered a harmless intellectual pursuit because it is impossible to do so. For the purpose of gaining an understanding of the colonial people and their customs, this was the most effective technique of learning about them because information was a kind of control. The ancient Sanskrit scriptures were the only source of information that these Indologists relied on, as stated by G. N. Devy. They chose to disregard the vast amount of literature and other forms of knowledge that were produced in medieval India. He believes that this was a deliberate effort to underline that although the land they had conquered had a lovely history, in the years that followed it had degenerated into a place that was enmeshed in superstition and other sorts of ignorance. He says this was done in order to emphasize the fact that the territory had once been beautiful. In contrast, the Bible and other works of European literature were translated into Indian languages throughout the course of history. As a consequence of this form of cultural colonization, indigenous languages and literary traditions were completely eliminated..

Ironically, these translations also aided the formation of Indian nationalist consciousness. India had its share of societal issues at the time, such as women's oppression and the caste system's inequity.

A new way of thinking was introduced to India by intellectuals who were forced to reevaluate many parts of social life due to the translation of European literature into Indian languages. Consequently, this prepared the way for the elimination of a great number of rituals and traditions that had been regarded as an integral component of Indian culture. Rabindranath Tagore made the observation that the entry of western philosophy into Indian territory had a liberating influence on the people of India. Western ideas served as a source of motivation for social reformers such as Raja Rammohan Roy, who fought for the benefit of his fellow people and the creation of a nationalist mindset. The natives acquired the colonizer's language and culture, which they then utilized to educate a populace that was still lacking in political knowledge about the political system. Sri Aurobindo is perhaps the most illustrative example of this possibility. He attended some of the most prestigious public schools in England and was raised in a home that was Anglophile. He had strong British aspirations throughout his childhood. Despite this, he was convinced that opposing the British in India was necessary due to his education, his exposure to concepts that were not indigenous to India, and his experiences working in India. Aurobindo was responsible for the translation of a significant amount of Indian literature during the time period that was characterized by a nationalist movement in Bengal that was becoming increasingly violent in the latter the first part of the twentieth century and the latter half of the nineteenth. (Some of these movements were led by Aurobindo himself). He was chiefly responsible for spreading the slogan "Vande Mataram" around the world as a result of his translation of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's Anandamath.. Concurrently with the expansion and intensification of the nationalist movement for Indian independence, there was a shift in the tone and tenor of translations into Indian languages. It is possible to discern a shift in this pattern after the year 1857. The act of translation was considered to be a symbol of political disobedience. The majority of the time, these were translations of writings from one Indian language into another that

reinforced the aggressive nationalist worldview. Premchand and Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi were responsible for translating texts that expressly urged for political self-confidence and revolution. This is something that we have examined previously. "The Indigo-planting Mirror" is the English translation of "Neel Darpan," which was first written by Deenbandhu Mitra in Bengali in the year 1858. The translation was intended to invigorate Bengal's intellectual elite because it was an explicit cry for rebellion against the rule of the British. The fact that it inspired Girish Chandra Ghosh to establish Bengal's first theater company suggests that it may have been successful in accomplishing this objective. The man who was suspected of translating the play, Reverend James Long, was brought to justice, and the English version was prohibited from being performed. Anandamath, which was written by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and translated into Indian, led to the widespread dissemination of the call to arms in favor of Mother India. After being translated into other languages, Vande Mataram became a rallying cry for nationalists. Sarat Chandra Chatterjee became well-known in the majority of Indian families as a result of the many translations that he had done. On the other hand, there are many who believe that he had the most widespread cultural influence in India during that period of time.

In order to interact with the general population, Mahatma Gandhi, who was of Gujarati descent, relied solely on translations. The political beliefs he held toward nationalism were shaped by his intellectual philosophy and manner of thinking. They were able to have a significant impact on the Indian independence struggle mostly as a result of their grassroots level of contact to the general populace. Individuals who remained anonymous and saw translating into many Indian languages as a goal were the only ones who were able to make this happen. When it came to the development of the country, translations were therefore absolutely necessary.

### **Translation in Post-Independence Era:**

Following the country's attainment of independence, India had a surge in the field of translation, which is closely linked to the nation and a sense of cohesion. Due to the fact that the nation was so diverse, it was absolutely necessary to place an emphasis on the nation's unity despite its diversity. Official efforts were made to use translations in an effort to build unity among the population, and the linguistic and cultural differences that existed among the population were minimized. One of these was the *Sahitya Akademi*, which published the journal *Indian Literature* with the slogan "Indian Literature is One Though Written in Many Languages." They were among those who participated. Through the use of the Adan Pradan method, a great number of works originally written in Indian languages were translated into other Indian languages. Additionally, the translation project that was undertaken by UNESCO concentrated on translating into English. Bibhutibhusan Bandopadhyay's Bengali novel *Pather Panchali : Song of the Road* (1968, trs. T.W. Clark and Tarapada Mukherji), Shridhar Pendse's Marathi novel *Wild Bapu of Garambi* (1968, tr. Ian Raeside), Thakhazi Sivasankara Pillai's Malayalam novel *Chemmeen* (1962, tr. Narayana Menon (1968, tr. Gordon Roadermal). As part of the UNESCO Collection of Representative Works, they were published. Today, prominent publishing houses such as Penguin, Macmillan, and Rupa encourage Indian books to be translated into English.

The liberation of society's oppressed groups, particularly women and Dalits, was also provided with a significant amount of assistance by translation. These voices, which had previously been isolated to their own regions despite the influence of their labor, received prominence on a national and international scale as a result of translations. Despite the fact that it is humorous that we still have to utilize the language of the colonizers in order to transmit their message, it is essential to emphasize that no concessions are made in order to satisfy the audience that is intended to receive the message. *Uchalya* by Laxman Gaikwad, *Fall* by R. R. Borade (tr. Sudhakar Marathe), and *Karukku* by Bama (tr. Lakshmi Holmstrom) are other instances. The English translations are carefully done so as not to weaken the bold and unvarnished language of the brutally honest stories.

The purpose of this is not to argue that the fact that English was the major language chosen for translating Indian literature is not problematic. There have been a lot of different interpretations of it, such as the fact that it shows our subjection to English or that it indicates that India does not have a common language. An outstanding illustration of this is the translations of Mahasweta Devi's texts that were done by Gayatri Spivak. Spivak was the one who translated Devi's stories, which reflect the suffering of some of Bengal's most oppressed populations, including tribal people. Spivak was not only a translator, but he also conceptualized postcoloniality in general and discussed the politics of translation. He accomplished a great deal more than just translate literature. It was because of her reputation as an intellectual that Devi came to the attention of the entire globe. What is the name of the Mahasweta Devi, who is well-known in countries other than India? Are we talking about a product of Gayatri Spivak? In her 1996 Jnanpeeth acceptance speech, Devi spoke about how translations had helped her gain national recognition. According to Harish Trivedi, Devi thanked Arvind Kumar, the director of the National Book Trust, for his assistance in setting up the translation into Hindi and other Indian languages. Spivak, the author, was in charge of translating the book into English.

On the matter at hand, there is a great deal of opportunity for discussion. In the present day, which phrase would you use in India to ensure that an author receives the recognition that that author deserves? You can find the answer in English. Due to the fact that only a small percentage of the people still speaks it, it is the only language that can be considered "Indian" in every region of the country. Since the time of the British Raj, it

appears that there has been a decrease in the amount of effort devoted into translating indigenous Indian languages. Within the realm of Indian literature, Sarat Chandra Chatterjee is currently the most well-known author in all Indian languages. Even though Hindi is the de jure language of business and government, the majority of the population still speaks English. For one thing, English is the de jure language of authority. A person's social and cultural standing in the community is also symbolized by it.. There is also imbalance in the relationship between the English language and the Indian language, and translations reflect this asymmetry. Considering that major publishing organizations are actively promoting translations to be published, it appears that India's translation sector is currently experiencing a period of rapid growth. There are numerous examples that indicate the increasing popularity and frequency of English-language translations, such as the Katha series, the Macmillan initiative to translate Indian literature, and other examples. Asaduddin contends that this should not be a cause for panic because "English has a vital role to play as a link language, and translation into English may surely support the evolution of a holistic vision of Indian literature." In other words, this should not be a cause for alarm. Additionally, it would be helpful in dispelling the idea that Indian literature is written exclusively in English when traveling to other nations. The majority of it, however, never makes its way to the people who were formerly colonized. The fact that the Empire is writing back in English (together with other Indians) is even another point. Consequently, who is the target audience for these translations? Now is an appropriate moment to think and ask certain questions, according to Shanta Ramakrishna: "By whom and, more importantly, for whom are translations done in India?" Who is the typical monolingual reader? What is the role of the academic bilingual reader? What about the colonial reader? Is there such a thing as a postcolonial reader? "How does a translator build a following?" (98). Honest responses to these questions would go a long way toward re-positioning us in relation to our mother tongues and cultures.

#### References:

1. Asaduddin, M. "Translation and Indian Literature: Some Reflections", *Translation Today*. <http://www.anukriti.net/tt5/article1/page1.asp>
2. Gopinathan, G. "Translation, Transcreation and Culture: The Evolving Theories of Translation in Hindi and Other Modern Indian Languages". <http://www.soas.ac.uk/literatures/satranslations/Gopin.pdf>
3. Ramakrishna, Shanta. "Cultural Transmission through Translation: An Indian Perspective", *Changing the Terms: Translating in the Postcolonial Era*. Eds. Sherry Simon and Paul St-Pierre. 2000. Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 2002: 85 – 100
4. Singh, Avadhesh Kumar. "Translation in/and Hindi Literature", *Translation Today* <http://www.anukriti.net/tt5/article1/page1.asp>
5. Trivedi, Harish and Susan Bassnett. Eds. "Introduction", *Post-Colonial Translation: Theory and Practice*. London: Routledge, 1999: 1- 18