

Trans-creation in Literary Translation of Shanta Kumar's *Lajjo*

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The word "Transcreation" is not found in any modern English dictionaries though it has been in use for many years. New Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (5th Edn. 1996) has recognised its usage in its supplement list of Indian English (Mukherjee 168). The word "Transcreation" is defined as a noun that means, "Creative translation seen as producing a new version of the original work" (Mukherjee 168). P. Lal was a pioneer in Indian translation studies who coined the word "Transcreation", a concept that gives a wider space to the translator's creative genius (Gautam 1-5). In her scholarly paper, "Translation as Transcreation" Anjana Tiwari explains the meaning of translation in Hindi as "Anuvad" (Translation) which means to take away, while transcreation is explained as "Anurachna". She compares the act of translation as a cross between 'straight translation' and 'creative copywriting' and identifies it as reader friendly (98). Transcreation is a sort of creative transformation from one language into another. While the creative writer can give wings to the flight of his imagination, in myriad ways, the translators are restricted by the source text. They have to follow the path shown by the author. If they deflect much, they may be accused of infidelity. In a modern metaphor, the source author can be likened to a vehicle which can move in any direction in covering a creative field, while the translator has to move in the rails, laid down by the author and if he tries to deflect much from that path, there is every chance of him being derailed.

The literary translation, involves a process of "coding" and "decoding" of meaning. This may sound to be a simple process, but this is not the case usually. The translator has to cross a number of linguistic barriers to recreate a meaningful and aesthetically pleasing translation. The reason for undertaking such a methodology is that a reader approaches a translation as creative text and not as a mean to enhance knowledge through the informative contents. They expect, that the translation will give them the same sense of aesthetic pleasure as the original. The works of

various well known and acclaimed writers have been translated across the world in different languages. Many of these translations have been acknowledged as the work of art in itself. The case in point is the English rendering of Gabriela Garcia Marquez's well know novel, *Cien años de soledad* (One Hundred Year of Solitude). Marquez was quoted in Paris Review in 1981 stating: "A good translation is always a re-creation in another language. That's why I have such great admiration for Gregory Rabassa" (Orient). Similarly, some original works are so well translated that it is difficult to make out, whether the work is a translation or the original. The empirical evidence gives credence to the statement, that the translations are creative pieces in themselves.

Essentialism "claims that meaning is objective and that the translator's job is to find and transfer these and hence to remain as invisible as possible" (Chesterman 17). This stand of the essentialism regarding the stability of meaning is not tenable in the view of the fact, that each translation of a text (by the same or the different translators) is unique. One of the reasons for this inherent instability of meaning is that, each translator will interpret and recode the message differently, at creative, cognitive and emotional level. So non-essentialism, like the deconstruction has a major role to play in the praxis of translation and hence the translator has to play a major role in the process of creative language transaction. Literary translation is not a mechanical exercise, but is a creative one. This is because, the translator has number of choices in translating culturally loaded words and the translator's job is to find the right equivalences in the target language. It follows that translation is a recreated text, organically different and original work. Unknowingly or knowingly, the translator's creativity is at play and to negotiate the challenges of translation, the translator may deviate from the original text. It is widely accepted that international culture is not homogenous and is either marginalised or dominant. Translation is thus not only a replacement of words by their equivalents in another language, but it is also a mode of resistance of canonical cultures. Hence transcreators unwittingly tend to nativize the target language. Hence, to avoid a mere slavish imitation, a forceful transcreation involving temper and experiment is a necessity.

The transcreation, not only involves a simple translation, but a sort of

improvement, rejuvenation and rewriting of the original text. It improves upon the flaws of the original and also acts as a problem-solving technique. For example, in this sentence: “...श्मशान घाट की बाईं और सड़क के दायें किनारे पर वह चीड़ का एक बड़ा वृक्ष था” (Kumar 52), the author had indulged in verbosity, in pointing out the location of a pine tree in the narrative. This sentence was translated in a straight forward manner and with brevity of words as: “...it was a big pine tree, located between the cremation ground and the road” (Sharma 72). Occasionally, some verbs of the source language sentences are replaced by the non-equivalent verbs, from the target language. This is to account for, “reader’s cultural and intellectual background” (Baker 222). Moreover, the translator has to make sure that the audiences are able to comprehend the indications present in the translation. For example, it is perfectly all right for a Hindi speaking person in India, to drink tea, but English sensibilities will get disturbed, if they had to drink tea. Instead, the English people usually sip tea. As far as drinks are concerned, anyone associated with English culture knows what drinks mean for the English people. So, in translation of this sentence, “भाभीजी आपने तो चाय पिलाने को कहा था; पर आप तो चाय से नहलाने लग पड़ी” (30) the verb “पिलाना” was replaced by English verb, “have” and the sentence was translated as; “*Bhabhiji* you had asked me to have tea, but you have started bathing us with tea.” Similarly, it made perfect sense to the readers of *Lajjo* when Sumer had said: “मुझे लगता है लाजो के पैर अवश्य झुलस गए होंगे” (30). However, the speakers of English know that foot cannot get burned in English, but the skin on the foot can. Hence the above-mentioned sentence was translated as: “I feel that the skin on *Lajjo*’s foot is singed” (36). Similarly, the verbs introducing the direct speech of the characters in the source text was monotonous. In most instances, the direct quotes were introduced by the phrase: “उसने कहा”. However, the translation of these introductions was dynamic, involving multifarious approaches according to the context, relevance and situations in the text.

At times the narrative in the text is emotionally charged and author had intentionally used special linguistic style to produce a poignant effect on the readers. Translation in these cases has to operate, beyond the scope of the theory of equivalences, especially in the light of the view that even within a text, a word cannot be simply replaced by its prepositional synonym. For example, the idiomatic phrase “आपके दिल पे जो बीती है” in a middle of the source text

sentence; “सुमेरचन्द जी आपके दिल पे जो बीती है उसे शब्दों में प्रकट नहीं किया जा सकता” cannot be translated with its exact equivalent, but has to be translated keeping in mind the contextual background against which these words were uttered (Kumar 35). These words were spoken by the District Magistrate, when he had come to express his condolences, on Pyar Chand’s death in the war. Sumer Chand was aggrieved that all the enemy’s territories, captured by Indian soldiers, including Hazipur Chouki, were returned to the Pakistan, according to Tashkand agreement. It was in the battle for Hazipur that Pyar Chand had laid down his life. I had first translated the phrase as: “what has happened to you”. However, during the first editing, I realized that this translation was not able to transfer the intended message. This translation could have been interpreted in multiple ways. It could have meant that, either something had happened to a person or a person is ill and that these words were spoken by someone to express his/ her sympathy. With these thoughts in mind, the sentence was transcreated as: “Sumer Chand *Ji*, what you underwent cannot be expressed in words” (Sharma 45). The translator, felt that this translation had been able express fully, the intended message of the source.

While translating Narender Nirmohi’s short story “Bukhari” from Hindi, into English, the present researcher comes across a peculiar difficulty. At particular instance during the narrative, the author had tried to bring out the emotional state of soldiers, deeply troubled by the death of fellow soldier, due to excesses committed by an officer. The translator felt that to successfully translate the plight of these soldiers, it is imperative that audiences have some idea about socio-cultural history of the south Asia. A few lines from the source text and its English translation is reproduced to make the point clear: “सोच और चिन्ता से झुका सर, अभी अभी बिदा करके आए बापस धीरे धीरे उठ रहा था” (Nirmohi 32). ‘The head drooped, because of the turmoil and concern and then rose like that of a father’s head, who had just bid adieu to his daughter’s *Doli*’ (Sharma “Bukahri” 2).

Now the drooping of the head of a soldier, has been compared to that of a father, who just bids adieu to his daughter’s *doli*. The researcher’s first impulse was to simply translate the word “doli” with the word ‘palanquin’ and that seemed to be the right equivalent of the word in the target language. However, on second thoughts, he felt that, justice would not be done, if

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only a surface replacement is made. For the Hindus, the word “doli” does not simply mean a wooden structure that is used in carrying a new bride to her in-law’s house but has deeper psycho-cultural connotations. For a Hindu father of yesteryear, when his daughter sat in the palanquin, after her marriage, it meant that all her ties with her parents’ home have been severed. This is quite traumatic for the parents, as well as the daughter. Hence, the word was retained and was added to the gloss, in a bid to maintain the emotional effects of the original in the translation. For a non-Hindi reader, even the Hindi word *maa* is quite confusing. The word means mother in English, but to call Parvati as *maa* is different and contains religious connotations, which is similar to calling Gandhiji as *Bapu* (father). Hence, translation is not a simple replacement of surface equivalents, but extends far beyond that. Bassnett writes:

Translation is a kind of textual journey from one context into another. What distinguishes translation from other kinds of writing is precisely the dual relationship involved in that Journeying. There is always a source of translation, an original text, and the act of translating involves the transformation of that source into something other, into a text that can be read by a completely new set of readers, in another time and another place. (78)

Similarly, the speakers of a particular language have a unique sense of humour. The jokes rendered in a language, may not make much sense to the speaker of another language. The translator may make a fool of him/herself, if s/he engages in a “word for word” translation in translating humour. For example, popular TV serial “The Kapil Sharma Show” may not make any sense to the European or western audiences. Even the south Indian or the people from the northeast may not understand the underlying meaning of the humour, exhibited in the show and some may take umbrage.

Sometimes the theories of equivalences fail and the translator has to translate according to the conventions of the target language. For example, if this part of original sentence: ... की उसका काम जल्दी कर दें (Kumar 82) was translated according to the theory of ‘word for word’ translation, this sentence would have roughly translated as: “...to do this girl’s work fast.” This however, would not have made any sense to the target audience. So, the translator

had translated this sentence as: "... to finish off her business expeditiously" (Sharma 122). Here, the translator had taken care of tenor and the register of target language to convey the inherent meaning of the original text, to the target language reader. To translate the word "जल्दी", I chose the word "expeditiously" over the word "fast" because it perfectly suited the context, whereas the word "fast" would have caused ambiguity and confusion. Similarly, a sentence like: "क्या मुसीबत है यह भी!" (Kumar 72) was translated as "What a trouble this too is!" (Sharma 106). It can be observed here, that in this translation too, the source language lexical items, are not simply replaced with their target language equivalents. In translating, a Hindi phrase, "तुम नई रौशनी के छोकरे", the translator instead of focussing on literal precision, chose to generate a "dynamic equivalent." Hence, this phrase was translated, keeping in mind the target language register and the tenor usage and this phrase was translated as, "You new generation youngster."

The "selectional restrictions", put up by the target language, justify the omission, addition and replacements of lexical items (14). Many a times a translator has to retort to "circumambulation" in a bid to meet the expectations of the prospective readers (Baker 57). For example, following sentence: "पति मिलते ही मैं विधवा हो गई" (Kumar 52), was translated as: "I soon became a widow" (Sharma 72). Here, the word "husband" was summarily deleted, because its, usage become obsolete, as per the cultural norm of target language. It is because, the girls from west, usually do not get husbands, but chooses them. Otherwise also, the translation was able to cut across the original message without this word. Similarly, the word, "रोटी" was replaced by the word, "food" because in Hindi, *roti* may mean, "full meal" and not just a piece of bread. Similarly, in transcreation, of this paragraph. "लाजो कुछ बोल तो सकती नहीं थी, इसलिए आग्रह भी कैसे करती। वह कुछ देर और खड़ी रही। सुमेर समझ गया, बोला, अच्छा, तम्बाकू भर के ले आ—एक चिलम, बस और कुछ नहीं" (Kumar 37), the additions of certain lexical items were necessary. If the translator had simply translated the phrase "सुमेर समझ गया" as "Sumer understood", a question would have naturally arisen in the mind of readers, as to what he understood. This would have caused a semantic gap and hence the word "reason" was added to complete the sense. Finally, this phrase was translated as, "Sumer understood the reason" (Sharma 48).

A collocation like, "कच्चा फर्श" cannot be literally translated as, "earthen

floor” or “raw floor”, as it may sound weird to the target audience. So, this word was simply replaced by the word “earth” that made a perfect sense in English. The difference in collocational patterning in two languages requires the additions of certain lexical items, which fills the collocational gaps. For example, in this Hindi sentence: “गाँव में बांस की लकड़ी तथा बाण की बुनी हुई चारपाई ही एक मात्र फर्नीचर था” (Kumar 33), was translated as: “The cot made up of bamboo and *baan* was the only furniture in the village houses” (Sharma 42). So, it can be observed that the word “village” was added to fill the linguistic gap between two languages. Similarly, to maintain the collocational and semantic propriety of the target language, the word “आवाज़” was dropped from this source text sentence: “दूसरे कमरे से सुमेर के कराहने की आवाज़ आई” (Kumar 56) and the sentence was translated as: “They heard Sumer’s groan from another room” (Sharma 80).

The quest for fidelity to the source text, both at level of form and the meaning was achieved, in some rare instances, in the extant translation. While translating certain paragraphs of the source text, it seemed that translation was smooth and natural. In those moments of euphoria, the translator was able to seize the moment and quench his thirst for such hard to find fidelity to the source text. This particular phenomenon was witnessed, while translating these series of sentences: “आप घबराओ मत। यहीं बैठो। सरकारी ईमारत खाली है, रात आप वहाँ पर सो जाओ। आपका सब प्रकार का प्रबंध हो जाएगा।” (Kumar 47). To the translator’s surprise, these sentences were easily translated as: “Do not you worry. Be seated here. A room is vacant in government building. You sleep there in night. Everything will be arranged for you” (Sharma 66). Though the translator has to use his creative skills and replace certain source lexical items, with equivalent target lexical items, it was relatively easy to translate these sentences. Similarly, the close equivalence achieved in the translation of the following sentences, strengthened the translator’s faith in Hindi-English translation. Original sentence: “लपटों का धुआँ आकाश की ओर दौड़ रहा था” (Kumar 59). Translation: “The smokes from the flames was running into the sky” (Sharma 84). The part of sentences like, “उसने मन ही मन धन्यवाद किया और अपने आपसे बोली...” (Kumar 47) was faithfully rendered as, “She thanked him from the core of her heart and thought . . .” (Sharma 66). Here, the equivalent of reporting verb is suitable modified, whereas the idiomaticity of the source language

was maintained. Similarly, at word level too, the equivalence was achieved in some instances. For example, the Hindi words *vat-vriksh* was faithfully translated as “Banyan tree.”

The technique of introducing back references during narration is different across the languages. For example, a Hindi sentence like this: “उसने लाजो को कहा” (Kumar 57), refer back to narrative in the preceding sentence. Actually, Kanta had touched Sumer’s hand and found it to be feverous. So, if this sentence is to be translated simply, then the translation would be roughly like: “She told Lajjo”, which is correct as per the prepositional meaning of the words in the sentence, but the question is: Was this the actual intention of author? Answer to this question is: probably not. So, taking care of the all aspect of narrative context, the sentence was translated as: “She apprised Lajjo about the matter” (Sharma 80).

For a translator, it is a serious challenge to restructure long sentence in the target language and requires him/ her to take a bold decision with regards to altering the original structures of these sentences, so as to transfer the inherent message of these sentences in all its entirety. The translator is also under severe pressure to transfer meaning, message, aesthetics and the structures of the source text, into the target text. For example, the translation of this extraordinary long sentence in the opening paragraph of source text proved to be a herculean task for the translator: “हाथों में लाल चूड़ा, माथे पे बिन्दी, सिर में सिन्दूर और विवाह के नए कपड़ों में सज-धज कर थाली हाथ में लिए जब वह घर के बड़े दरवाजे से धीरे धीरे कदम उठाती बाहर की ओर निकली तो ऐसा लगा जैसे वह सुहागरात के लिए पति की सेज पर जा रही हो।” (Kumar 1). After many unsuccessful attempts, the translator had translated the above sentence as: “As she slowly stepped out from the main door of the house in her new wedding dress, carrying the plate in her hands, wearing red bangles on her wrists, putting a *bindi* on her forehead and vermilion between the partings of her hair, it appeared as if she is moving towards her husband’s bed on the first night after marriage” (Sharma 1). It was really difficult to replace the numerous cohesive devices used in source sentence, with equivalent devices of the target language. Because, either such devices were wanting or such devices didn’t exist in reality. It required high degree of creative skills to transfer exactly, what the translator had intended originally. The entire effort of breaking the structure of the original sentence and then realigning them

according to the grammatical conventions of the target language can be compared to the operation carried by an expert cardiac surgeon, who dexterously replaces the original heart with its, artificial substitute, after ripping up the patient's chest. Aided by the working knowledge of the syntactics and the semantics of the target language, it was purely creativity endeavor to reposition the punctuations and lexical items of the source text sentence at the appropriate places in the target text sentences. Another sentence of the source text: "उसके शहीद चाचा का सबने मान-सम्मान किया, जलसा हुआ, शहीद के चित्र को फूलमालाएँ पहनाई गई, गाँव के स्कूल का नाम उसी के नाम पे रखा दिया गया।" (Kumar 23), was translated as: "Everyone offered tributes to his martyr uncle. A procession was carried and the martyr's picture was garlanded. The village school was named after him" (Sharma 26). If we examine the original sentences and its translation, we will observe that the original sentence was broken down in three smaller sentences. The translator could have joined the sentences with conjunction "and", but again this would not have achieved the natural cohesion, as was seen in the original sentence. While in this case, a large source sentence was synthesized, the extant translation saw the combination of many sentences of the source text into a larger sentence in the target text. For example, these sentences, हर युग का अपना एक धर्म होता है। अपनी मर्यादा और मान्यताएँ होती हैं।" (Kumar 24) was translated as: "Every age has its own religion, its own dignity and its own assumptions (Sharma 27)." Translator was forced to separate the two sentences, as per the syntactic norms of the target language. Apart from grammatical reason, some sentences were combined for the semantic reason too. For example, these two sentences लज्जो घर में अकेली थी, इसलिए उसे ही पानी लाना पड़ता था, उसके वृद्ध ससुर तो जा नहीं सकते थे।" (Kumar 25) were translated as; "Lajjo was only one in the house and hence she had to fetch the water from the Babri, as her old father-in-law could not perform this task" (Sharma 30). Translator encountered an interesting problem in translating this sentence. At the level of equivalence, the first sentence would have been translated as: "She was alone in the house and hence she had to fetch the water from the Babri." There was every possibility that such a translation would have been misinterpreted by the target audience. They may have thought that, at one point of time, Lajjo was alone in the house, so she had to fetch the water herself. Similarly, the simple translation

of second sentence could have meant that his old father-in-law could not go. However, this was not what the author had intended. So, the translator took a conscious decision, to translate these sentences at level of “implicature” (Baker 218). So, it could be observed that the actual translation of these sentences was self-explanatory and clearly explained the circumstances, under which Lajjo was forced to fetch water from the Babri. Hence it follows that, a successful translation has to be forceful transcreation, where the role of translator is not limited to mere replacement of the lexical items of the source language with the similar lexical item of target language, but the translator also has a proactive role in capturing the intention and imagination of the author.

Sometimes a punctuation mark of the source text is replaced by different punctuation mark in the target text. For example, in the following quotation: “भाभी हमारा जीना भी कोई जीना है!” (Kumar 26), the exclamation mark put up by the author at the closing, was replaced by the question mark, by the translator and the sentence was translated as: “*Bhabhi*, is our life worth living?” (Sharma 30). The translator was in serious dilemma, about how to translate this sentence. At first instance, this sentence was also translated as: “*Bhabhi*, what is our life?” Considering the theory of fidelity, the translator was under sub conscious pressure to retain the original punctuation. The rules of English grammar regarding question marks read as: “They are necessary, however in the case of rhetorical questions, even though no answer is expected” (Manser 355). Hence, inspite of being aware that the author had used the exclamation mark, in a bid to show the emotional state of Kanta’s mind, the translator had replaced it with question marks as per the grammatical usage of English. In another instance, the question mark at the end of a direct quotation/ question was replaced by the exclamation mark. Let’s examine the sentence and its translation. The original sentence is: “नहीं पहुँचे?” विस्मय से ज्ञाननाथ ने पूछा।” (Kumar 53) was translated as: “Had not yet returned!” Gyan Nath was astonished. (Sharma 74). Surprisingly, the author ended this sentence by a question mark and not by exclamation mark, apparently due to grammatical usage restriction. However, to compensate for the loss of emotional emphasis, the author had added a word “विस्मय” after this quotation, that amply expresses, the feeling of surprise, exhibited by the speaker. The translator too had the

choice, to put the question mark at the end of this quote and then translate the reported speech as: “Gyan Nath asked with surprise?”, but somehow, his creative vigour demanded otherwise. The translator felt that the word “astonished” have more emotive force than the word “surprise” and hence the exclamation replaced the question mark at the end of this source quote.

Translation experiences like the one recorded above, demonstrate that translation indeed is an act of creative arbitrariness. Capturing the imagination and intention of author, then recoding it, in a required manner is a creative art. To bind this artistic work in the limits of theories, norms, prescription and conventions is both undesirable and unpragmatic. The inherent stability of meaning in a language, gives freedom to the translator to interpret the source text in any manner. The sharp difference, in the syntactic conventions, semantics, culture and the history of any two languages, necessitates the translator to be creator. Otherwise also the translation has to be aesthetically pleasing, so that it is also appreciated at par with the original. An unexciting and simple translation is less likely to engage the reader and they may approach the text only for its contents. Hence, translation is kind of re-creation that provides the best solution to even the trickiest problems of translation.

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