



Translated Works in Indian Writing in English

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Translation has been defined variously at different times in the past. For some, it is the falsifier of the original for others, it is a carryover of meaning from source language to target language and still, for quite a few, it is transference of meaning from source language to target language. All these definitions are partially true but inadequate to describe the meaning of translation in the full sense of the terms. All the latest theories have rejected the notion of original being primary and translation as secondary. There is no such dichotomy between the original and the translated text, for the original is itself a translation of ideas, notions and so on. If the notion of translation has changed over the years, what should be the role of a translator as is very well propounded by Joseph Graham:

“Translator like the critic has been traditionally considered as inferior to the creative writer. But now, thanks to the post- structuralists, the critic is taken as co- creator and criticism as co- creation. Can we envisage such a role for a translator? What are the qualifications of a translator? What are the qualifications of a translator? He must know two languages – the source language and the target language- equally well. A creative writer or a critic can perform his role well by being monolingual but a translator must be bilingual. Not only that, he must have inwardness with both the languages. Otherwise, he cannot be a good translator”.¹

The translators have played a significant role in literature generally, and in Indian Writing in

English in particular. In Indian writing in English, there are some self-translator who have translated their own works into the target language in which Girish Karnad, Rabindranath Tagore, and Manoj Das are worthy of detailed consideration. Rabindranath Tagore is one of Indian writers who has won Nobel Prize for literature for translated works. This is because he has transcreated his own work into English- Tagore translated his works from Bengali into English. Nida argues in one of his articles, “A Framework for the analysis and Evaluation of Theories of Translation:’ Before the formulation of generative-transformation grammar by Naom Chomsky Nida had already adopted an essentially deep-structure approach to certain problems of exegesis. In an article entitled “A New Methodology in Biblical exegesis, he advocated the back transformation of complex surface structures on to an underlying level, in which the fundamental elements are objects, events, abstracts and relations.”²

The first and the foremost among the Indian writers is Girish Karnad, who has immensely contributed to the field of translation. Girish Karnad first writes his plays in Kannada and then translates (rather, transcreates) them into English, and that is why, he is taken to be an Indian English dramatist. His plays have not only translated into English but in some other Indian languages. Karnad’s plays are written neither in English, in which he vainly dreamt of earning international literary fame as a poet, nor in his mother tongue Konkani, instead they are composed in his adopted language Kannada. Initially, his command on Kannada was so poor that he often failed to distinguish between short



and long vowels. When Karnad started writing plays, Kannada literature was highly influenced by the renaissance in western literature. Writers would choose a subject which looked entirely alien to manifestation of native soil. C.Rajgopalachari's version of the *Mahabharat* published in 1951, left a n indelible impact on him and soon, sometime in the mid 1950s, one day he experienced a rush of dialogues spoken by characters from Mahabharat in his adopted language Kannada.

Eventually, *Yayati* was published in 1961, when he was 23 years old. It is based on the story of king Yayati, one of The the ancestors of Pandavas, who was cursed into premature old age by his preceptor, Shukracharya, who was incensed at Yayati's infidelity. Yayati in turn asks his sons to sacrifice their youth for him, and one of them agrees. It ridicules the ironies of life through characters in Mahabharata. It became an instant success, immediately translated and staged in several other Indian languages.

In a situation like that Karnad found a new approach like drawing historical and mythological sources to tackle contemporary themes, and existentialist crisis of man, through his characters locked in psychological and philosophical conflicts. His next play was *Tughlaq*, about a rashly idealist 14th century Sultan of Delhi. Muhammad bin Tughlaq, and allegory on the Nehruvian era which started with ambitious idealism and ended up in disillusionment. This established Karnad, now 26-years old, as a promising playwright in the country. It was staged by the National School of Drama Repetory under the direction of Ebrahim Alkazi, with the actor Manohar Singh, playing the visionary king who later becomes disillusioned and turns bitter, amidst the historic Purana Qila in Delhi. It was later staged in London by the National School of Drama for the festival of India in 1982.

Hayavadana was based on a theme drawn from The Transposed Head, a 1994

novella by Thomas Mann, which is originally found in the 11th century Sanskrit text Kathasaritsagar. Herein he employed the folk theatre form of Yakshagana. A German version of the play was directed by Vijaya Mehta as part of the repertoire of the Deutsches National Theatre, Weimar. Naga- Mandala was based on a folk tale related to him by A.K. Ramanujam, brought him the Karnataka Sahitya Academy Award for the most creative work of 1989. It was directed by J. Garand Wright, as part of the celebrations of the 30th anniversary of Guthrie Theatre, Minneapolis. The Theatre subsequently commissioned him to write the play, Agni Mattu Male. Though before it came Taledanda which used the backdrop, the rise of Veerashaivism, a radical protest and reform movement in 12th century Karnataka to bring out current issues.

Karnad made his acting as well as screenwriting debut in a Kannada movie, *Samskara* based on a novel by U.R. Ananthamurthy and directed by Pattabhirama Reddy that won him first President's Golden Lotus Award for Kannada cinema. Over the years he had acted in a number of Hindi and Kannada movies. He also played the role of Swami's father in the T.V. series *Malgudi Days* based on R.K. Narayan's books.

Vijay Tendulkar is also one of the most prominent figure among the Indian playwrights whose contribution in the India drama is immense. He has translated a number of work from Marathi language into English. With his advent on the literary scene, he began his career with the play, Amchyavar *Kon Prem Kamar* (*Who Will Love us?*) After that, he wrote the play *Gruhastha* (*The Housekeeper*), in his early 20s. These works translated from Marathi into English and earned him name and fame in the world of literature. After that, in 1956 his another translated work from Marathi to English entitled, *Srimant* was published. This work jolted the conservative audience of the times with its radical storyline, wherein an



unmarried young woman decides to keep her unborn child while her rich father tries to buy her a husband in an attempt to save his social prestige.

Tendulkar's early struggle for survival and living for sometime in tenements in Mumbai provided him first hand experience about the life of urban lower middle class. He brought new authenticity to their depiction in Marathi theatre. His translation of the Marathi plays changed the storyline of modern Marathi theatre in 1950s and 1960s with experimental presentation by theatre groups like Rangayan. .

Tendulkar wrote the play *Gidhade(The Vultures)* in 1961, but it was not produced until 1970. It was , later on, translated into English. The play has been set in a morally collapsed family structure and explored the theme of violence. In his further creations, Tendulkar manifested the theme of violence in its varied forms: domestic, sexual, communal and political. Thus, the translation of the present play proved to be a turning point in Tendulkar's writings with regard to establishment of his own unique writing style.

Based on a 1956 short story, *Die Panne(Trap)* by Friedrich Durrenmatt, Tendulkar wrote the play, *Shantata! Court Chalu Aahe('Silence! The Court is in Session')*. It was , later on , translated into English and presented for the first time in 1967 and proved as one of his finest creations.

In his one of the translated plays, *Sakharam Binder* is also a popular play which deals with the topic of domination of the male gender over the female. The protagonist of the play is a man devoid of ethics and morality, and professes not to believe in "outdated" social codes and conventional marriage. He accordingly uses the society for his own pleasure. He regularly gives them shelter to abandoned wives and uses them for his sexual gratification while remaining oblivious to the emotional and moral implications of his exploits. He justifies all his acts through claims of modern, unconventional

thinking and comes up with hollow arguments meant in fact to enslave women.

In 1972, Tendulkar wrote another, even much more acclaimed play, *Ghasiram Kotwal* which deals with political violence. The play is a political satire created as a musical drama set in the 18th century Pune. It combines traditional Marathi folk music and drama with contemporary theatre techniques, creating a new paradigm for Marathi theatre. This play demonstrates Tendulkar's deep study of group psychology and brought him a Jawaharlal Nehru Fellowship for a project entitled 'An Enquiry into the pattern of Growing Violence in Society and the Relevance to Contemporary Theatre'.

Apart from all the above discussed translated plays by Vijay Tendulkar, in 1991, he wrote a metaphorical play, *Safar*, and in 2001 he wrote the play, *The Masseur*. After that he wrote two novels- *Kadambari: Ek* and *Kadambari Don-* about sexual fantasies of an ageing man. In 2004, he wrote a single act play, *His Fifth Woman-* his first play in the English language- as a sequel to his earlier exploration of the plight of women in *Sakharam Binder* which was performed at the Vijay Tendulkar Festival in New York in 2004. According to Wolfarm Wilss' translation theory is rooted in German idealism and the research branch of his science clearly reveals such a methodology as he asserts: "Translation research must develop a frame of reference which views a text as a communicatively-oriented configuration with a thematic, a functional, a text-pragmatic dimension ; these three dimension can be derived from the respective text surface structure."³

Rabindranath Tagore is also one of those Indian writers who contributed a great deal in the field of translation. Originally he was a Bengali poet, philosopher, artist, playwright, composer and novelist who earned equal name and fame after translating his works in English as he earned in writing in his native language. He is India's first Nobel Laureate who won the 1913 Nobel



Prize for literature. He composed travelled the text of both India's and Bangladesh's respective national anthems. He travelled widely and was friend with many notable 20th century figures such as W.B. Yeats, H.G. Wells, Ezra Pound and Albert Einstein. While he supported Indian Independence, he often had tactical disagreement with Gandhi. His body of literature is deeply sympathetic for the poor and upholds universal humanistic values.

Author of *Gitanjali* and its profoundly sensitive, fresh and beautiful verse, he became the first non-European to win Nobel prize in literature. In translation his poetry was viewed as spiritual and mercurial; however, his elegant prose and magical poetry remain largely unknown outside Bengal. Tagore introduced new prose and verse forms and the use of colloquial language into Bengali literature, thereby freeing it from traditional models based on classical Sanskrit. He was highly influential in introducing the best of Indian culture to the West and vice versa, and he is generally regarded as the outstanding creative artist of modern South Asia. Through his translation of Bengali literature, Rabindranath Tagore has modernized Bengali art by spurning rigid classical forms and resisting linguistic strictures. His translation of his into English of

novels, stories, songs, dance-dramas, and essays spoke to topics political and personal. *Gitanjali*, *gora*, and *Ghare-baire* (The Home and the World) are his best known works, and his verse, short stories, and novels were acclaimed- or panned- for their lyricism, colloquialism, naturalism, and unnatural contemplation. His translated compositions were chosen by two nations as national anthems.

In this way, various writers have contributed a great deal to the development of translated works.

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