

PRESERVATION OF ENDANGERED LANGUAGES THROUGH TRANSLATION

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India has rich heritage of language diversity comprising several hundred languages and dialects, approximately individual 1,652 (languageinindia.com). Today many linguistic societies have been confronted with the challenge of its language survival. And attempts are in progress on the level of government, society, literary institutions and individuals to save many endangered languages. We have two types of languages—one those which have written form or script and another those which have only spoken form. Scholars and researchers have been working on these two levels and trying to discover the ways of language survival. Among many ways of language preservation, translation is one of the most faithful and assured tools to regenerate and re-form a language. For many years, it has been assumed that translation had a major function in surviving of literature only, but with global perspectives on translation and the socio-cultural turn in Translation Studies, the scope of the function of translation has been widened and the notion of preservation of language through translation gained currency. In the multilingual country like India, translation has to play multi-functions as surviving of languages, literature and culture, a bridge of communication among a host of languages, enriching native languages and literature, an effective tool in business and industry so and so forth. With the rise of English as a lingua franca and a dominant language in India, it is very necessary to work on other languages which are on the verge of extinction.

The present paper *Preservation of Endangered Languages Through Translation* is an attempt to discover and remaking of how translation can be proved a useful tool in survival of languages. Here the focus will be on those languages which have spoken as well as written form.

Why translation is so significant? No one can acquire all, even many languages but can understand two-three languages in the country like India. We know the literature of ancient civilizations like Greeks, Romans, Indus, etc. How this ancient literature has been spread from one part to the other parts of the globe? What was the medium? The medium was nothing but translation. Though we do not understand source language of the Ramayana or the Mahabharata which is Sanskrit, the Bible which is Hebrew and later English, and of Quran which is Arabian, yet we know these sacred texts very well. How? Through translation only. In India, there is a great tradition of oral literature and hence oral translation. In every human sphere translation is significant: to understand and meet the global needs in the field of science and technology, commerce and business, arts and cultural exchange, education and research, medicine, etc. Translation is one of the booming industries ever widening its area from literature and education to professional translation in government and private sector. No business can be successful on a varied geographic and linguistic area without translation. It is a proper channel of

communication not only between two different languages but also between two distinct cultures a cross-cultural communication.

Translation is as necessary as our very breathing to understand global relations in terms of Arts, Science, and Commerce. Since learning more languages or writing proficiently in an alien tongue is hardly possible, the work of translation for the rise, promotion and development of literature, art, business, technology, medicine, etc. is inevitable. It rightly promotes experiments and discoveries; it enables inter-linguistic communication in a country like India where multi-linguistic culture exists. (Patil 09).

The access point of the minor and native literatures of any language in the world has been remarkably increased with the rise of translation as a distinct discipline of study. It controls monopoly of languages and make them interact with other native languages. Before 1970s, translation did not receive the status as creative writing had, but thanks to various turns in Translation Studies, perspectives of translation scholars, effects of globalization and increasing need of translation in almost all fields of human activities caused to gain the status not less to creative writing, or sometime more significant. Because translation did a great upliftment to literatures by opening doors for people of other languages. Think, what would have been happened to great literatures of different languages of our nation without translation, it would have been locked only to that particular language in which it was written or composed. Translation is, in a sense, rewriting and hence recreation from source language into target language.

Here is the inception of our main concern—the role of translation in survival of dying languages. Before coming to the direct point, let's have a look at some statistics. Considering the linguistic diversity of India, approximately there is 216 mother tongues, 114 other languages, 96 non-specified/ non-scheduled languages and 22 languages are recognized by the Indian Constitution i.e. scheduled languages (see appendix). But according to UNESCO report (2009), 196 languages are endangered in India:

With 196 of its languages listed as endangered, India, a nation with great linguistic diversity, tops the Unesco's list of countries having maximum number of dialects on the verge of extinction. India is closely followed by the US which stands to lose 192 languages and Indonesia, where 147 are in peril. The facts were revealed in the latest Atlas of World's Languages in Danger of Disappearing unveiled by the UN's cultural agency UNESCO on the eve of International Mother Language Day on Saturday. The atlas classifies around 2,500 of the 6,000 languages spoken worldwide as endangered. It further adds that nearly 200 languages have fewer than 10 speakers and 178 other have between 10 to 50 speakers. It reveals that over two hundred languages used in the world have died out over the last three generations, 538 are critically endangered, 502 severely endangered, 632 definitely endangered and 607 unsafe. "The death of a language leads to the disappearance of many forms of intangible cultural heritage of traditions and oral expressions of the community that spoke it". UNESCO director-general Koichiro Matsuura said." (Financial Express).

It reveals the linguistic scene of India in the world languages forum. It is, indeed, a very serious situation of languages spoken in the world which are on the very boundary of

disappearance. Looking at the UNESCO report, it is very difficult to increase the speakers of endangered languages immediately, but the languages can be recorded, interpreted and translated for their survival. The famous literatures of an endangered language can be translated into other language or vice versa which will help to widen the scope of a particular language. Let us consider a case in point, Gondi is a tribal language spoken in the tribal districts of eastern Maharashtra which has a rich tradition of oral literature especially tribal folksongs. These songs can be translated into standard version of Marathi and of course there is a good literature in Marathi which also can be translated into Gondi and made open to Gondi people and the language scholars who are studying it. The communication gap between Gondi community and others will be diminished to a greater extent through translation. And translation is a strong form of resistance: “This form of resistant can be expressed strongly in the field of literary translation. Although translation of literature is but a minor part of translation activity as a whole, it has the potential to become an agent of subversion that can upset the plans for domination by any single language. Perhaps translation is the only means to maintain the precious diversity that can keep a monolingual world at bay.” (neptl.iitm.ac.in).

The preservation of the beauty of literature is a way to revitalize a language can be done by translating it into other languages. Translation works as a representative agent between two different languages, cultures and even societies and contribute to both i.e. source and target language by generating a survival bond of communicative relations:

“Translation is, I believe, an attempt to give voice to the voiceless languages of the world. By translating Indian literature into an international language such as English, I am enabling the writers to be read outside their linguistic frontiers.” (Parthasarathy 169-70). It is a tool of empowerment of a weak language which imparts the power to powerless; e.g. Gondi traditional folksongs can be made available into the powerful language like English and famous poetry of Romantic poets—Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Coleridge, Blake and many others—can be translated into Gondi. It will take care of aesthetic values of both the languages—SL and TL. In India many agencies and organizations like Sahitya Academy, Indian Translation Mission, Indian Translators Association, Schools and Departments of Translation Studies and Linguistics in Indian Universities are pursuing satisfactory work in the field of preservation of languages particularly through translation. Therefore, there is a scope to adhere that: “Translation is the oxygen that keeps a language alive. Without it, the language would become stale, and its air unbreathable.” (Pathasarathy 185). Hence Translation guarantee, though not hundred percent, but to a larger extent, to save endangered languages and produces not speakers but at least readers of that language.

Recommendations: The attempts can be made on the level of individual, institution and government to save dying languages with the help of translation; following remedies will do needful in this regard:

1. Awareness is necessary about endangered languages among common people, educationists, scholars and researchers.
2. Motivation should be given to scholar researchers to commence translation projects based on endangered languages. Translation activities should be directed to save languages.
3. Translation projects need to be assisted with adequate funding and support by various agencies, organizations and of course government for survival of languages.
4. New translation policies should be started, implemented and made clear to individual researchers and institutions.

5. Every activity directed to endangered language translation must be encouraged and promoted on various levels from individual to government.
6. Publishing industry has a great importance in publishing books, reports and other documents on language translation, and therefore it should be promoted to publish translation material on and in various languages.
7. It is significant to establish relation pacts among translational, linguistic, cultural and educational institutions which are working in the same area.

These are some of the recommendations and remedies which will definitely help in rejuvenating the extinct languages. Because language translation:

“Allows what has been said in one language in a way that its message is clearly understood and its effects closely recreated. Let’s hope that the field of language translation continues down its exciting and successful path so that we can steer the modern world away from linguistic monopolies and keep our many, wonderful languages alive.” (Thiruvassagam 04).

With language translation the hope of survival of languages is alive and the contribution of translation—though a small genre in the whole scene of language environment—cannot be ignored, even I think, without language translation it is most difficult or just impossible to regenerate a (endangered) language.

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Appendix

Endangered Languages in India: Aimol, Aiton, Aka, Anal, Angami, Angika, Ao, Apatani, Asur, Andmanese, Badaga, Baghati, Balti, Bangani, Bangni, Bellari, Bhasravahi, Bhalesi, Bharmauri, Bhumji, Biete, Birhor, Bodo, Brokshat, Bunan, Byangsi, Chambeali, Chang, Chokri, Churahi, Darma, Deori, Dimasa, Gadaba (Ollari), Galo, Gangte, Garhwali, Geta, Gondi, Gorum, Great, Gutob, Handuri, Hill Miri, Hmar, Ho, Hrangkhoh, Irula, Jad, Jangshung, Jarawa (Andaman Island), Jaunsari, Jaung, Kabi, Kachari, Kanashi, Kangdi, Karbi, Khampti, Kharia, Khasali, Khasi, Kheza, Khiamngan, Khoirao, Howa, Kinnauri, Koch, Koda, Kodagu, Koirang, Kolami, Kom, Konda (Dravidian), Konyak, Koraga, Korku, Koro, Korwa, Kota, Kui, Kului, Kumaoni, Kundal Shahi, Kurru, Kuruba, Kiurux, Kuvi, Langang, Lamongse, Langrong, Lhota, Liangmai, Limbu, Lishpa, Luro, Mahasui, Malto (Paharia), Manchad, Manda, Mandeali, Mao, Mara, Mram, Maring, Mech, Meithei, Miji, Milang, Minyong, Mising, Mizo, Moyon, Mundari, Muot, Mzieme, Nahali, Naiki, Nihali, Nocte, Nruanghmei, Nyaishi, Onge, Padam, Paite, Paite, Pangvali, Parji, Psi, Pengo, Phom Pochuri, Pu, Purik, Rabha, Remo (Bonda), Rngma, Rongpo, Ruga, Sanenyo, Sangtam, Sentilese, Sherdukpen, Shompen Simi, Singpho, Sirmaudi, Sora, Soiti, Tagin, Tai Nora, Tangkhul Tangsa, Tarao, Thado, Tiwa, Toda, Toto, Tulu, Turi, Wancho, Yimchungru, Zangskari, Zeme, Tai Phake, Tai Rong, Takahanyilang, Tamang, Purum,

Scheduled Languages: Assamese, Bengali, Bodo, Doegri, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Maithili, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Santhali, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu.

Non-Scheduled Languages: Andi, Anal, Angami, Ao, Arabic/ Arbi, Bhilli/ Bhilodi, Bhotia, Bhumji, Bishnupuriya, Bodo/ Boro, Chakesang, Chakru/Kodgu, Deori, Dimasa, English, Gadaba, Gangte, Garo, Gondi, Halabi, Halam, Hmar, Ho, Jatapu, Juang, Kabui, Lotha, Lushai/ Mizo, Malto, Mao, Mram, Mring, Miri/Mishing, Mishmi, Mogh, Monpa, Munda, Mundari, Nicobarese, Nissi/Dafla, Nocte, Paite, Parji, Pawi, Phom, Pochury, Rabha, Rengma, Sangram, Santali, Savara, Sema, Sherpa, Tangkhul, Tangsa, Thado, Tibetan Tripuri, Tulu, Vaiphei, Wancho, Yimchungre, Zeliang, Zemi, Zou, Karbi/Mikri, Khandeshi, Kharia, Khasa, Khezha, Khiemnungan, Khond/Khondh, Kinnauri, Kisan, Koch, Koda/Kora, Kolami, Kom, Konda, Konyak, Korku, Korwa, Koya, Kui, Kurukh/ Oraon, Lahauli, Lahnda, Lakher, Lalung, Lepcha, Liangmei, Limbu.