

THE POLICY OF RETENTION IN THE TRANSLATED TEXTS

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ABSTRACT

This paper is an attempt to compare Premchand's original story Thakur ka Kuwa in Hindi with its translated version in English by David Rubin in his collection of short stories The World of Premchand, and Manu Bhandari's Aapka Bunty in Hindi to its translation to Bunty by Jai Ratan. There are number of untranslatable words in the stories, which have cultural connotations such as "Lota", "Kuppi" etc. These words have no substitutions in English. Therefore, these words have been retained as they are in the regional language in English translation. Albeit, there are several words, which have substitutions in, English but still the writers retain the original words. The paper would focus on the reasons for this retentions. 1) this creates a multilingual text and questions and the assumptions about standard language. 2) Retentions also create a sense of cultural difference and the need to maintain it.

My paper explores the effects of these possibilities. The paper would enlist and discuss the differences, retentions and interventions evident in the stories and their respective translations.

This paper is an attempt to compare Munsi Premchand's *Karmbhumi* in Hindi to its translated version in English by Lalit Shrivastava, and Manu Bhandari's *Apka Bunty* in Hindi with its translation *Bunty* by Jai Ratan. The theme of *Karmbhumi* is the upliftment of the downtrodden poor including the untouchables, and the inherent right of people to better their lives irrespective of their birth of station in life as expressed through the Hindu Philosophy of Karma. In *Karmbhumi*, the marital life of Amarkant and Sukhada is played out against the backdrop of class conflict and People's Movement. The marriage fails due to differences between the two personalities, but they come together towards the end with each realizing the other's worth. In the process, Munsi Premchand expounds his ideas on education, on religion, on marriage and rights of women, his dislike of the superficialities of religion, and priests who prey, upon the gullibility of the villagers, the power of self-sacrifice and mass movement, and his dreams of independent India.

On the other hand, *Apka Bunty* is breaking new ground on the male and female relationships in the context of Indian society. Bhandari has focused on the backdrop of fast changing social ethos after Independence. It is seen that in both novels, the central theme is the

breaking up the relationship between man and woman. *Karmabhumi* was published in 1932 in the pre-independent era while *Apka Bunty* was published in 1971.

Even though the period of these novels is different, both translators of these novels have followed a policy of retention in choosing to keep some words as they appeared in the original Hindi versions of the novels. Not only this, in *Apka Bunty* Manu Bhandari uses English words and phrases, and the characters are also well educated, they know the English language and even they used English language in everyday life. The Both Translators of these novels try to maintain the flavour of the original by retaining culturally specific words. The other reason for the retention of Hindi names and words is that it could add to the reading experience of the Indian reader familiar with the setting of the novel in its particular Indian context. The third reason is that, perhaps the translator fears a loss of interest or meaning of the sentence due to the lack of equivalent syntactical structure and emphasis in English. By the use of the strategy of retention of culturally specific words, the translators seem to hold on to an idea of Indianness for these texts. It is also useful for bilingual readers.

There are certain characteristics to words that the translators have chosen to retain in both the texts. Words that pertain to religion are retained because the translators feel that it is not possible to make a proper translation of religious or cultural words, such as for example 'dharma'. Among the Hindi words that have no counterpart in English and one, which occurs repeatedly in *Karmabhumi*, is the word Dharma. According to the translator, Lalit Srivastava, "Dharma has several meaning depending on the context: religion, duty, code of action, morality, moral principles, obligation, and righteousness. The concept of duty or code of action or dharma is not an inflexible entity but is commensurate with one's station or place in life. When a specific meaning is clear I have translated dharma into that meaning, otherwise I have left it as dharma." (pp.3)

For instance, in *Karmabhumi* Part-1, Chapter-8, Amarkant the character gives a definition of dharma. "You consider bathing in the Ganges and worship and scripture reading as the essentials of dharma. I consider truth service and charity as the essentials of the spirit. Bathing, meditation, worship and fasting are merely the means to dharma, they are not dharma itself." (pp.38). It seems ironic that there is no agreement on the meaning of dharma even among speaking of Hindustani. The text of the translation becomes self-reflexive about the inadequacy of language to gauge the meaning of the word "dharma" in this case, even as the translator chooses to retain the word itself. In both novels, one thing is also notable: the translators' italicized words to highlight the retention. In Lalit Shrivastava's translated text *Karmabhumi*, we find the glossary of the Hindustani words used in the book has been provided for the bilingual readers. On the other hand, in 'Bunty' we do not find glossary of Hindustani words.

The second purpose of the writing is to suggest that the strategy of retention of culturally specific words points to translation as a bilingual activity rather than as a mode of presenting text in a singular language. The theme of *Bunty* engages with modernity and feminism. The original text is already written in Hindi with a mix of English words even though the translator retains several un-translated words, which have cultural connotations. Words like Thakurdwara, Bhang Achcha Batasha, Bigha Charpai, Dom-chamar, ikka-tanga, etc. That are retained in the translation are related to the Indian cultural context. It is obvious that the translator tried not to deviate too far from the intent and the spirit of the original. For example, in *Karmabhumi*, the sentences Hare k master *Tahshil ka Chaprasi Bana Baitha Hai* is translated as *Teachers sit in classroom like chaprasis in a tahsil office*. In the Hindi sentence, there is no indication about the

classroom. Tahsil is the metaphor of classroom. Here the author makes a comment on the teachers and compare with chaparasis. If the translator had used the word peon in the place of chaparasis, we would not get the extremeness of the situation. Another example that makes a case for retention is this sentence, also taken from *Karmabhumi*-Amkant had used the familiar 'Tum' with Pathanin. By the time he was leaving, 'Tum' had changed to the formal 'Aap'. If the translator explains this changed with the help of 'you', how can he make a distinction between Tum and Aap? The peculiar problem arises because in English there are not particular words for the familiar and formal 'you'. However, 'you' is used for both elder and younger people unlike in Hindi. Hence the cultural context would be lost if the same word 'you' is substituted for both 'tum' and 'aap' in the translation of Premchand's novel.

Sometimes it may be possible that when the translator changes some important dialogues, phrases, ghazals, or song, the extremeness of the emotions and feelings are lost. For example, the translation of *Apko meri vafa yad aai khair hai aaj yah kya yad aai* in *Karmabhumi* (pp.13) its translation is *that you remembered my devotion it is good, today at least you remembered*. The stanza is uninteresting when translated into English and even its grandeur has died. If the translator has retained words keeping in mind a bilingual readership, it may be possible to keep both versions-Hindi and English of the stanza. Some of the other cases of retention where the translator uses the original Hindi words like maidan, sadhu, chappal, achcha yaar etc all seem to need translation into English even though the translator keeps them as they are. At the time of the writing of *Karmabhumi*, people in villages were not aware of English Education. It is seen that the text of *Karmabhumi* is totally based upon Pre-independent era. Therefore, it is quite natural there is necessity to retain the Hindi original words to give the text a feel of authenticity, but 'bunty' is a modern feminist novel. The characters of this novel speak in English and use objects such as the 'drawing table', madam, disgusting, commitment and punctuate their dialogue with phrases such as "I mean it", "It is a must". However, the translator retains the original Hindi words in some places in the translation of this novel. When we talk about the difference in the worlds portrayed in both the novels, we can compare the language of both the novels, Amkant the character from *Karmabhumi* used the word "kaki". On the other hand, Bunty the character from "Bunty" used the word "aunty". Not only in the novel but also in short stories, the translators retain some words. For example, "Thakur ka Kuwa", is written by Munsii Premchand and translated by David Rubin. It is a story about upper and lower class people. The main characters are Jokhu and Gangi. When we read the story in its translated and original version, there is no translation of word-to-word. For instance, the word 'lota', in Hindi is retained as it is in its translation. In addition, the word 'Kuppi' (a small oil lamp). This word is retained in the translation. When we are reading the original Hindi story, we can feel the character's situation and we can sympathize with them. However, the characters lack appeal in translation because of the limitation of words.

In these ways retention of culturally specific words is a very important part of the translations of both *Karmabhumi* and *Aapka Bunty*. *Karmabhumi* a novel that is set in a feudal system, whereas *Aapka Bunty* is set in an urban world. Not only do the translator's choices in terms of retention favour a bilingual and largely Indian readership, but the retention also reflects a certain type of fictional space that the characters themselves seek out. This is especially true of *Aap ka Bunty* that illustrates a movement from the modern to the tradition, as when *Bunty* ends up joining the Sadhu at the end of the novel. It is within this specific narrative context of a character's return to an untranslatable core of tradition that the retention of words like "sadhu" in

the translation acquires more importance. I would like to conclude this paper by saying that the use of retention in both the texts, as I have attempted to show, succeeds in cases where literal translation might fall short of a bilingual readers' culturally turned reception of the fictional worlds.

Work Cited

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